Illustration

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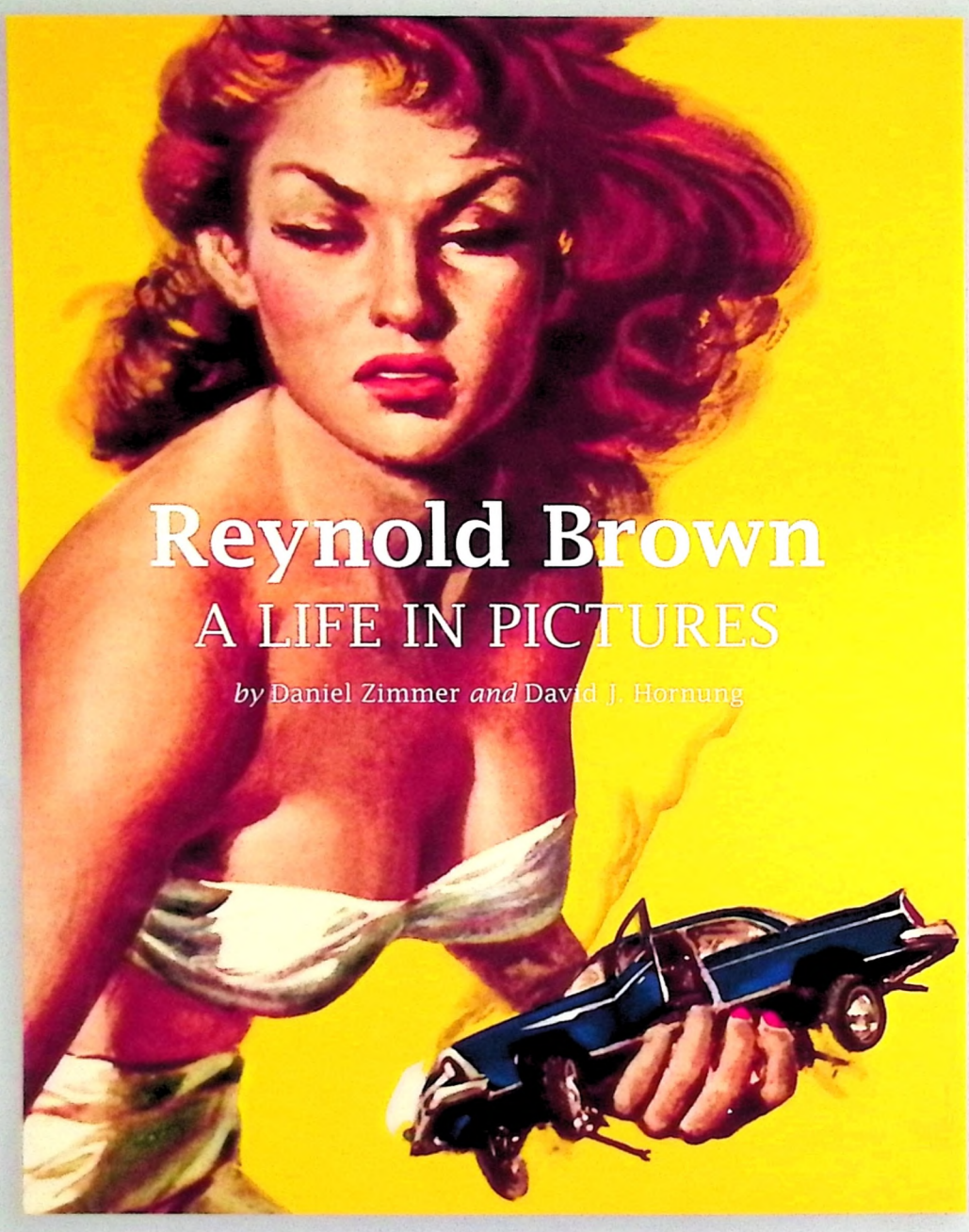

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(1907 – 1989)

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From the Editor...

It's hard to believe it's been seven years since the original publication of this issue! The magazine is now on issue #25 (with #26 waiting in the wings), and my company The Illustrated Press has recently released two major hardcover books. It's really fun to look back and see the humble beginnings of *Illustration*, and to be able to rework some of it to make things better, and to add a little more artwork! (Or a HUGE amount of new artwork, as this issue will attest. Over 90% of the Saunders article is completely new material.) If George Lucas can go back and tinker with *Star Wars*, I guess I can revisit the past myself! I hope that all of you will enjoy this new "director's cut."

I want to thank all of the many contributors over the years who have added so much to this publication. My good friend David Saunders and I first began our many collaborations with his story in this issue, and it's amazing to think how our first effort eventually led to the publication of our massive book, *Norman Saunders*. For me, this development has been a dream come true.

Thank YOU, dear readers, for your support over the years, and for helping to make this magazine a success. Stay tuned for more in the years to come!

Modern Mechanics, July 1932

Norman Saunders painting the cover for *Modern Mechanics*, 1932

Norman Saunders

by David Saunders

He was renowned for his luscious palette and exciting action scenes, his sexy women, and his ability to shoot from the hip when facing a deadline! Norman Blaine Saunders' illustration career was as big and successful as any artist could hope for, and no single genre could contain his remarkable talent. He painted them all—aliens and aviators, heroes and hunters, detectives and demons, quarterbacks and comic books, sex kittens and serial killers, westerns and wacky packs!

He was curious about everything in life, and his paintings were enriched with his detailed studies of people, history, science, and nature. No matter where his visual curiosity led, he branded that world with is own dynamic design, playful skepticism, and a solemn belief that life is tough. He was shockingly irreverent—a nonconformist who laughed at the self-righteous and advocated the School of Hard Knocks. He was a colorful story-teller, and an innovative thinker; charming, insightful, and fearless. He loved women, children, and puppies, and he always cried when the hero died.

His own autobiography begins…

"I was born in Minnesota on January 1, 1907. My very earliest memories are of the eighty acres that was our homestead and the one room log cabin we lived in, my mother, father, and I.

"My father served in the 7th Calvary with General 'Blackjack' Pershing in the Spanish American War. He became an ordained Presbyterian minister when I was seven—and we moved further north to Roseau County, where he had a circuit that he served—and where he took on the added duties of County Game Warden, which included the American half of the Lake Of The Woods—a tribe of the Chippawa Indians were there and by the time I was 12, was practically a blood brother."

The northern-most part of Minnesota, called Lake Of The Woods, was a wild frontier community of hard-drinkin' gun-totin' prize-fightin' crap-shootin' fur-trappers, moose-hunters, lumberjacks, railroaders and Indians. From the very beginning, Norm developed a rugged and humorously skeptical view of the human condition, and that outlook on life was profoundly confirmed when he read *Huckleberry Finn.*

Little Norm was such a darned-good doodler that the margins of his textbooks fascinated his classmates. All the students had to return their schoolbooks at the end of each semester, but before classes resumed, there was always a stampede of kids to reclaim Norm's books for their own use in the next semester. To restore order, the school set up a lottery to select the lucky winners. That raffle gave kids something to look forward to as vacation ended and it became a local tradition that lasted until the books fell apart.

Grandmother Jane Saunders, father Clare, Norm, Uncle Jimmy Cox, and Grandfather David Saunders, 1913

Early childhood drawing, 1920

After this first taste of schoolyard glory, there was no stopping him! He took a correspondence art course, ("Just to brush up!") from the Federal Schools and after high school, he won a full scholarship to the Chicago Art Institute. Although his tuition was paid for, he still had to earn his keep, so in addition to his farm chores, Norm tried to earn some money by mailing a few of his drawings to his favorite magazine, *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang*, a saucy joke-book published by William Fawcett in Minneapolis, and to his delight, they sent him back a check and an offer of steady work as an in-house staff artist. He stood at one of life's crossroads and asked, "Why should I go to Chicago to *study* to be an artist when I can go to Minneapolis and *be* an artist!" So in 1927, at age 20, Norm Saunders decided to forego his college scholarship to become a full-time artist.

Over the next six years he produced hundreds of cartoons, graphic maps, charts and technical diagrams in pen & ink, black & white gouache and full-color cover paintings. It was a valuable hands-on training in drafting, lay-up and mechanicals. He worked on most Fawcett Publications such as *Modern Mechanix, Technocrats, Whiz Bang, JimJamJems* and *Hooey*. He met a wonderful band of visionary young artists at Fawcetts, among them George Rozen, Doug Rolfe, and his best friend Allen Anderson. It was the "Roaring Twenties" and they were all a part of the industrial frenzy of the jazz-age—late-night speak-easies and home-brewed hooch. The camaraderie of this group of college-aged "modernists" sustained Norm throughout his life. Minnesota was overrun with "Swedes," and so was the staff at Fawcetts. Allen Anderson was often teased for his Scandinavian name, so the gang fished around for some nicknames and Norm suggested "Lil' Joe," just to be absurd, but it stuck and forever after he was "Lil' Joe" Anderson.

By 1934 William Fawcett decided to move his operation to the East Coast to capitalize on the expanding circulation of his magazines. Norm's talent was outgrowing the Midwestern publishing "empire," so he moved to New York to join the big leagues, competing for cover jobs with pros like Ralph DeSoto, Rudolph Belarski and Dean Cornwell.

The conventional procedure at the time was for newcomers to find work among the pulps, and if they played their cards right, in a few years they could hope to work for the "slicks." Established artists like J.C. Leyendecker, Coles Phillips and Norman Rockwell were all getting giant fees to help sell massive circulations of slicks like *Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers* and *Liberty*. So Dad got in line with all the others, thinking "Look out, Leyendecker! Here I come!" Norm made the rounds of all the major publishing houses with his portfolio of published works from the Midwestern publications, and pretty soon he had steady work. By 1936 he had all that he could handle.

Captain Billy's Whiz Bang

Just a Hand-y Guy

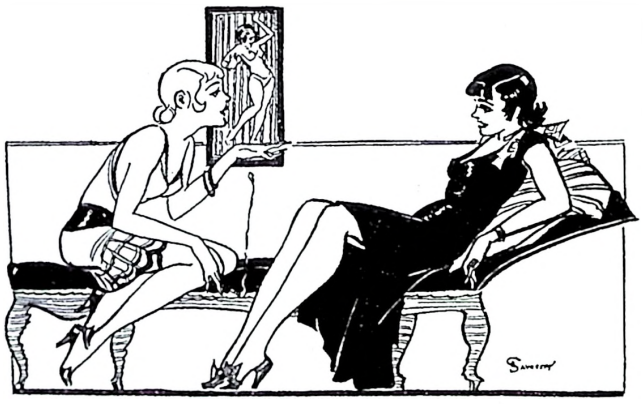
Rachel—"How do you make Abie take his hand off your knee?"

Becky—"That's easy—I just ask him to explain something."

Captain Billy's Whiz Bang, November 1929

Captain Billy's Whiz Bang

Not At All



Myrt—"Such petting I never dreamed of in my wildest moments."

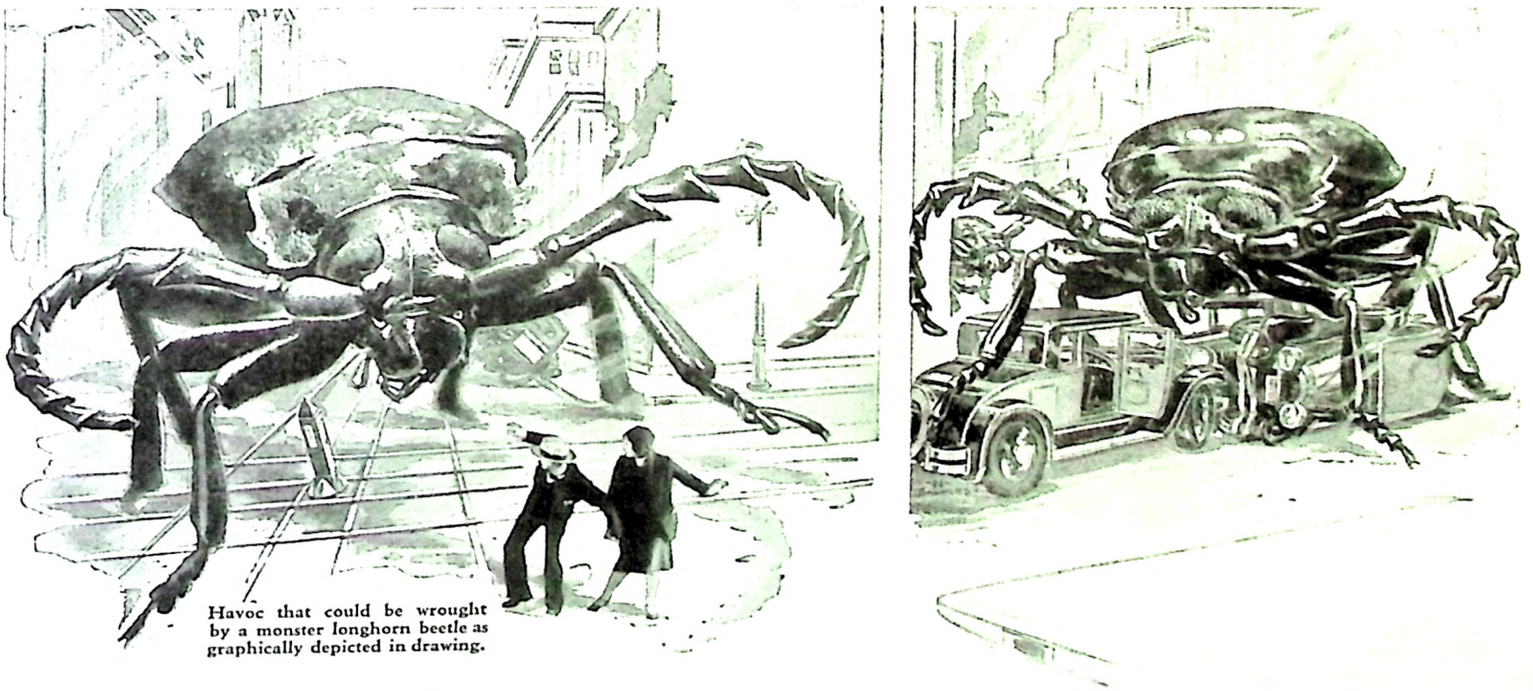
Gert—"No, in your wildest moments you don't have to dream of it."

Captain Billy's Whiz Bang, November 1929

Modern Mechanics and Inventions, August 1929

Modern Mechanics and Inventions, May 1932

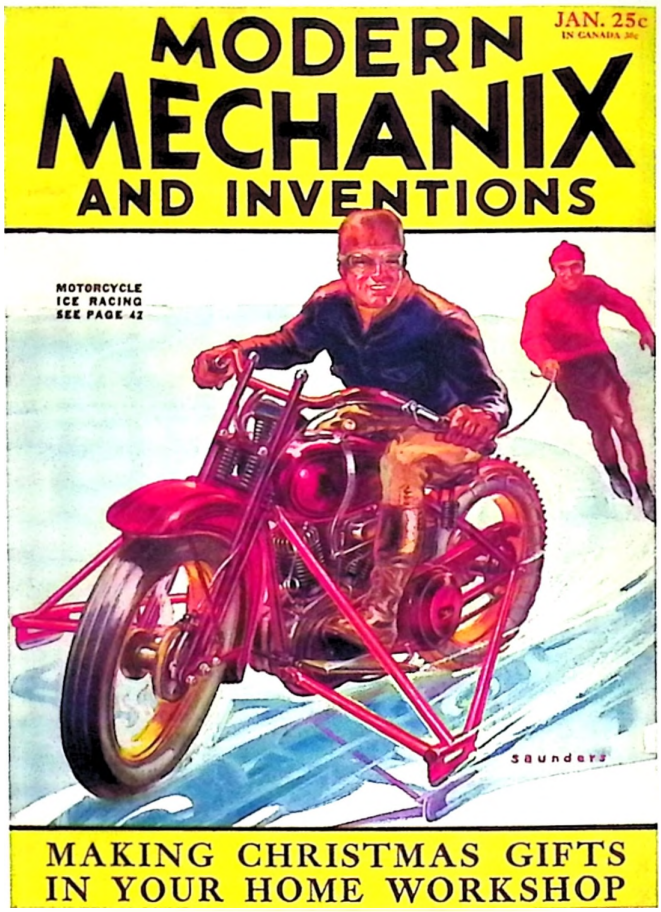
Will Monster Insects RULE the WORLD?



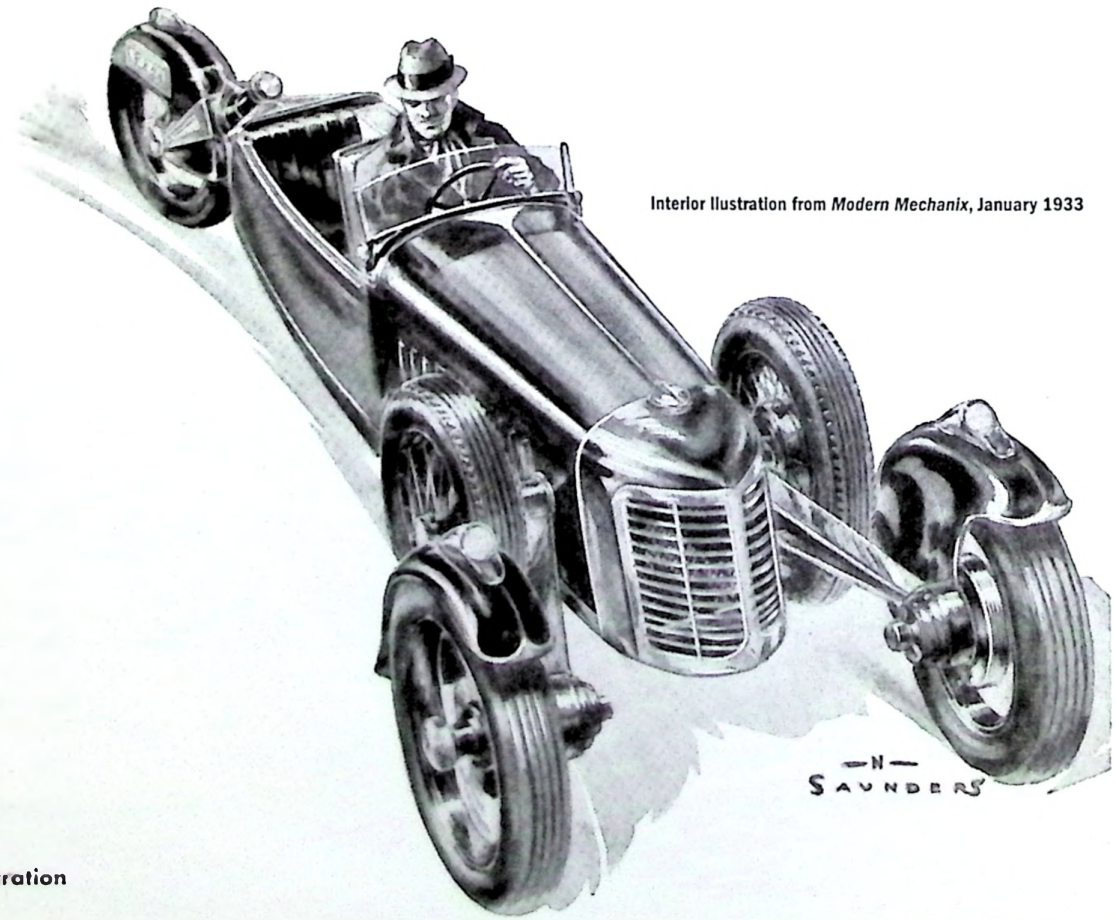
Havoc that could be wrought by a monster longhorn beetle as graphically depicted in drawing.

Modern Mechanics and Inventions, December 1930

Preliminary study for *Modern Mechanix*, January 1933

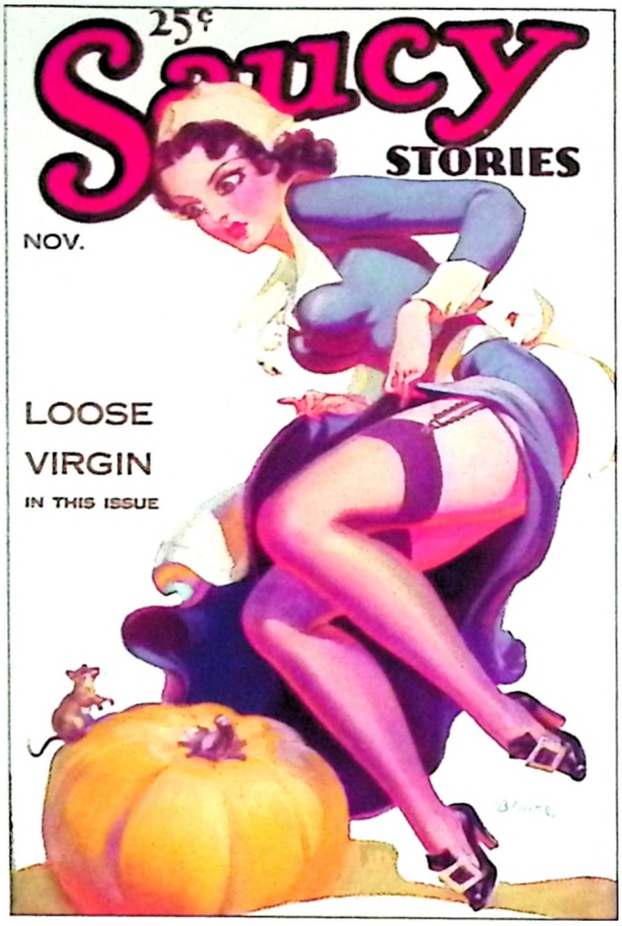


Modern Mechanix, January 1933

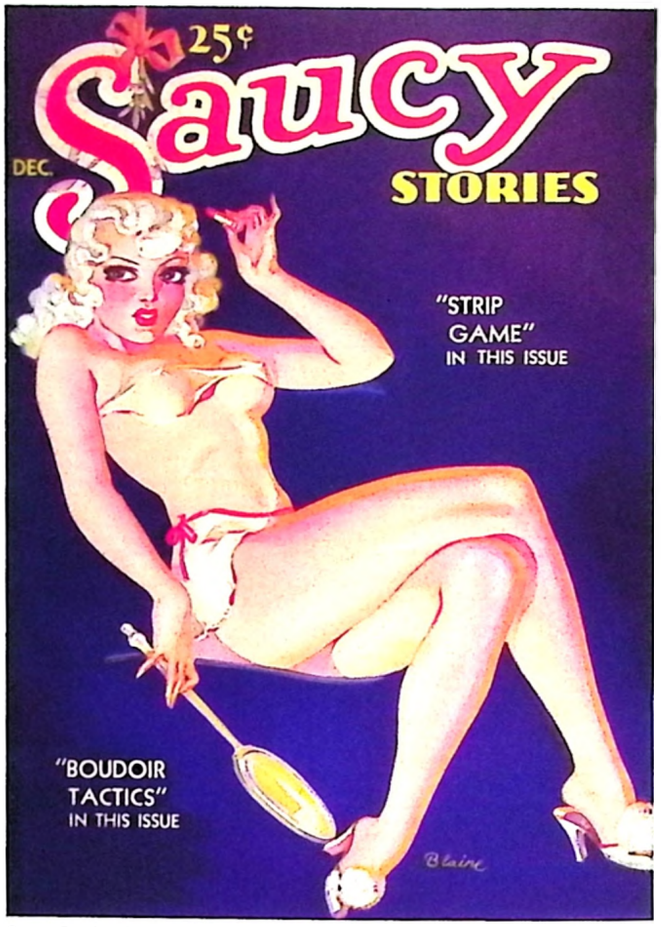


Interior illustration from *Modern Mechanix*, January 1933

Original painting for *Modern Mechanix*, January 1933



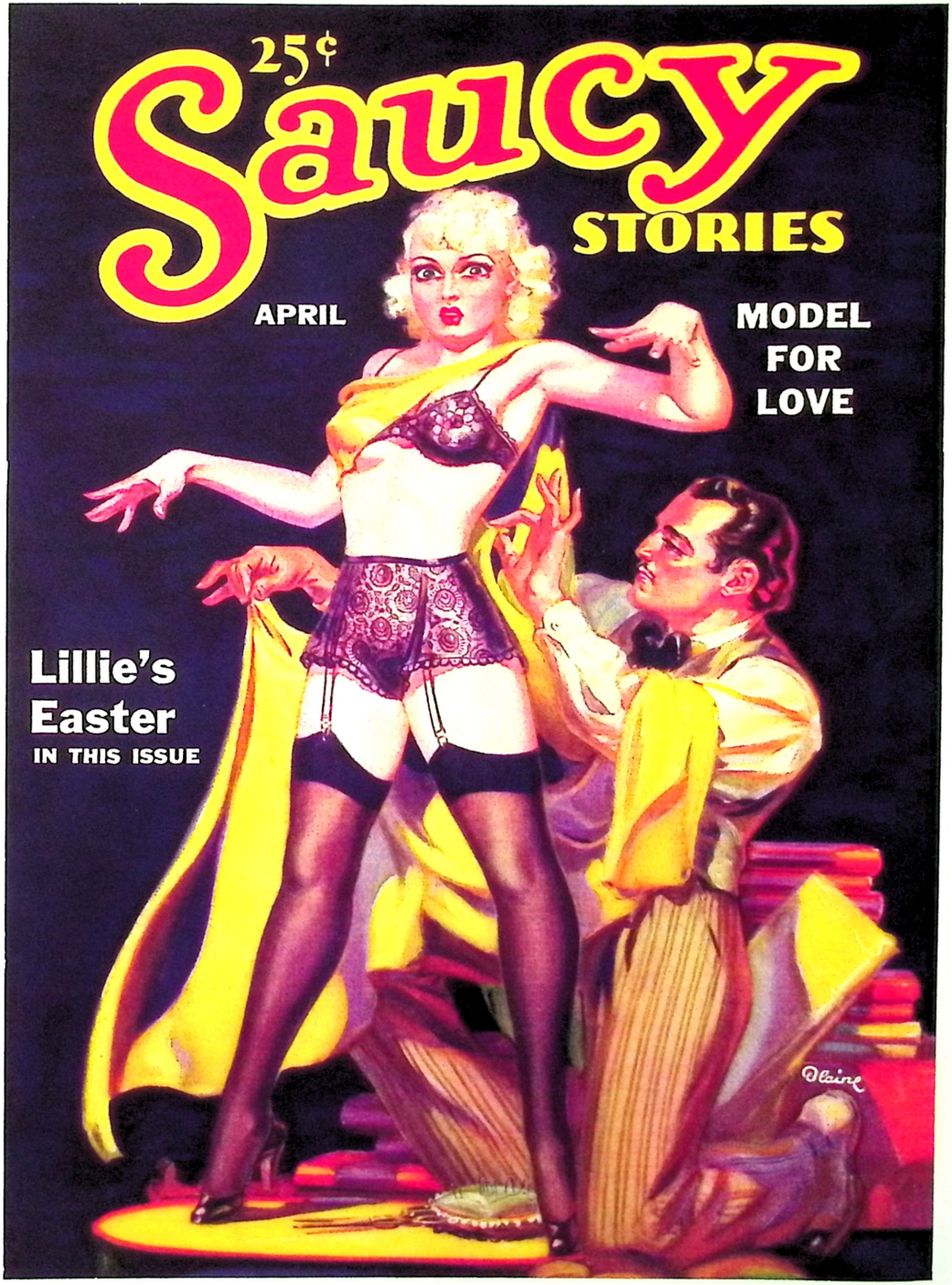
Saucy Stories, November 1935



Saucy Stories, December 1935

Saucy Stories, March 1936

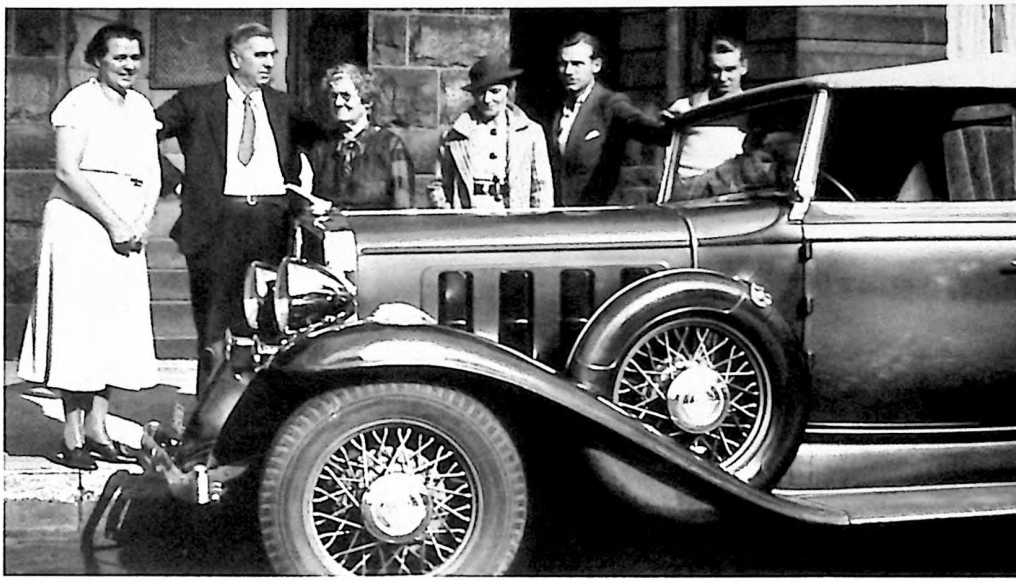
Saucy Stories, October 1935



Saucy Stories, April 1936

Saucy Movie Tales, March 1936

Norman Saunders, New York City, 1938



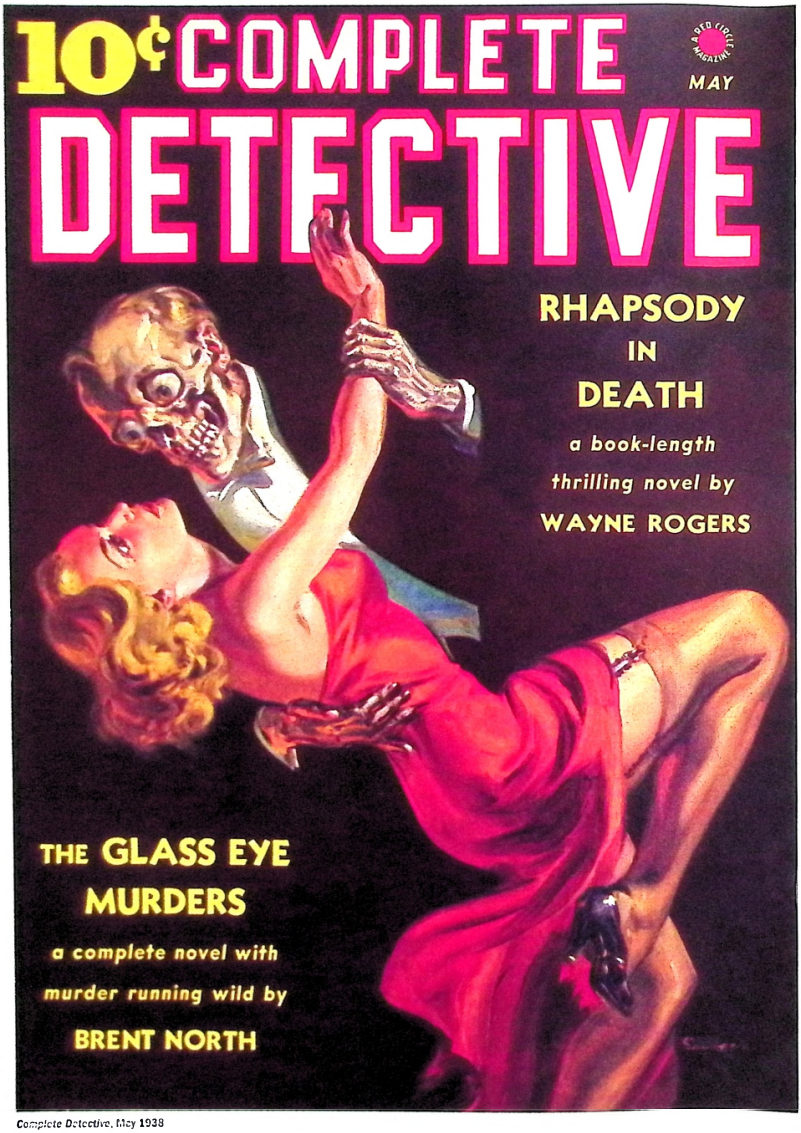
Elva and Clare Saunders, Arozina Cox, unidentified girlfriend, Norman Saunders, and brother Duane Saunders, Minneapolis, 1932

Night class at the Grand Central School of Art, 1936. (Harvey Dunn at center)

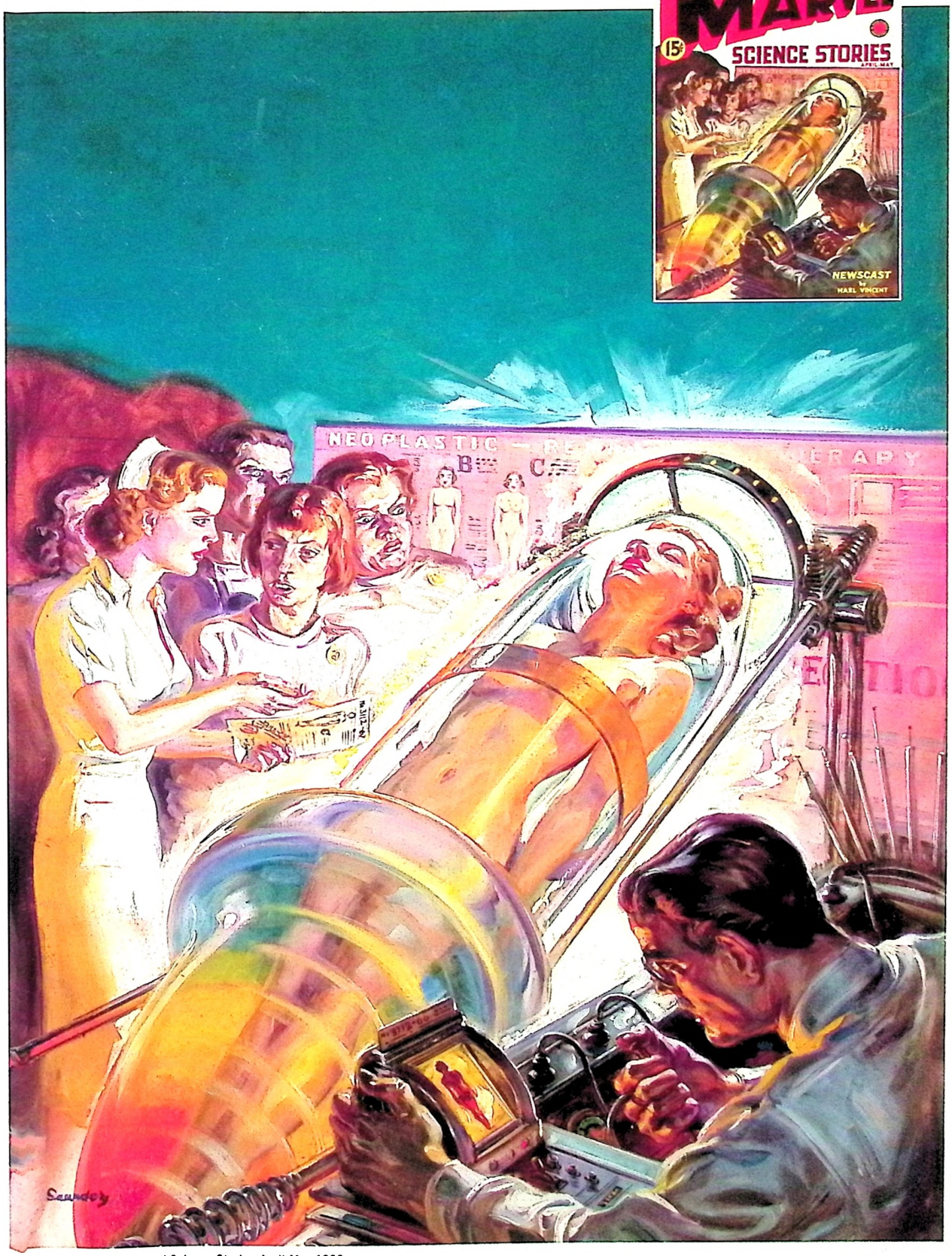
As Norm got to know the denizens of the New York publishing world, he heard about the famous evening painting classes taught by Howard Pyle's protegé Harvey Dunn at the Grand Central Art School. That was where Dad got his "graduate level" grooming and really learned to paint, along with Walter Baumhofer, Robert G. Harris, Tommy Lovell and dozens of other great illustrators from those golden years.

Dad loved the classes and profoundly respected "ol' man Dunn." His wisdom was filled with profound truths that applied to painting as well as life. *"Art is a universal language and it is so because it is the expression of the feelings of man. Any man can look at a true work of art and feel kin to it and with he who made it—By this you may know that the Brotherhood of Man,* is." All the students loved him. Dunn occasionally brought a selection of new magazines to class to critique and one night he singled out a pulp cover for lavish praise. Dad's face went red when another student spoke up, "That's one of Norm's covers!" Dad told me he felt awkward being the "art star" of the class but he was proud to be this particular teacher's pet. One day, Harvey Dunn came up behind Norm's easel and slapped him on the back and said, "Listen Blockhead, you're too damn good to hang around here pretending to be one of my 'pupils'! You've learned whatever I can teach you. You're good enough now so get out of the nest and fly! Go out and make yourself a living!" It was one of Norm's proudest moments.

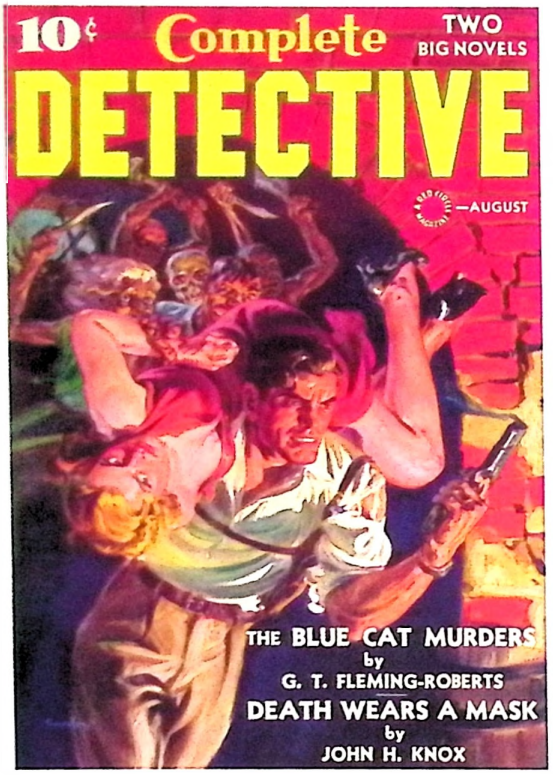
Norm became a top cover artist for dozens of magazines like *Eerie Mysteries*, *Ten Detective Aces*, *Wild West Weekly* and *Saucy Movie Tales*. "Before the war, I sold a hundred paintings a year for 25 to 75 bucks apiece, which was quite a chunk of change in those days! I was riding in style, right smack through the Great Depression!" His studio cost only $35 a month. He had a shave, shine and manicure every morning and he went to hear Horace Heidt's *Musical Knights* for dinner and dancing at the Biltmore Hotel. Norm was such a snappy dresser that one night as he entered the Hotel Astor a mob of fans shouted, "It's Harry James!!!" He literally ran for his life as they tore his tux to pieces! Norm had two cars—a Buick open-car and a Pontiac convertible, which both sat undriven in a parking garage that cost more than the average rent. He hired his favorite models every day from a local agency, but often desperate young women would find their way up to his studio, ring the bell and drop open their robes when he opened the door. If he was all booked up, they might suggest other more intimate services. As Dad reported it, he had pity on them, dressed them and sent them on their way with a hand-out and with a tear in his eye.



Complete Detective, May 1938



Original painting for *Marvel Science Stories*, April-May 1939

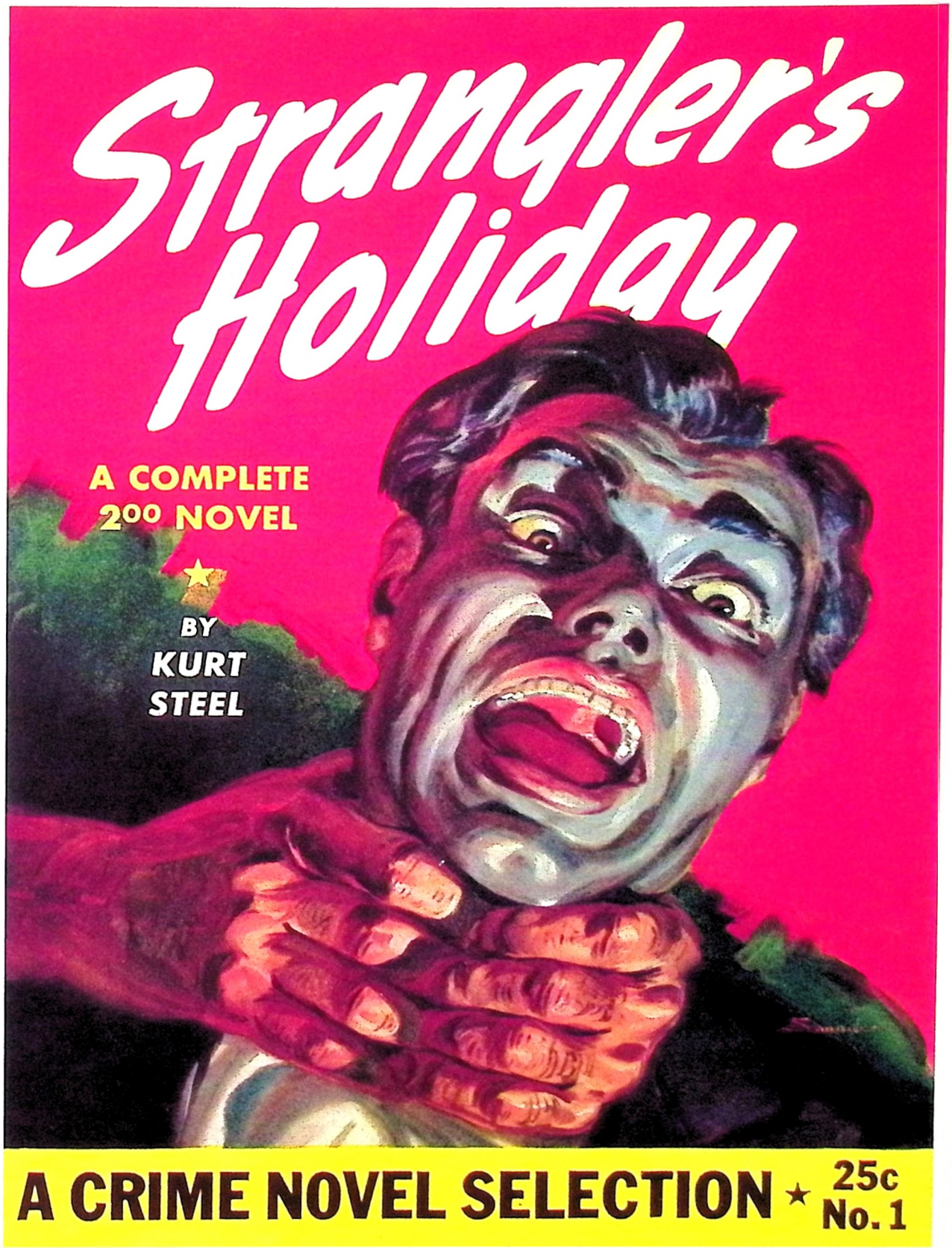


Complete Detective, August 1938

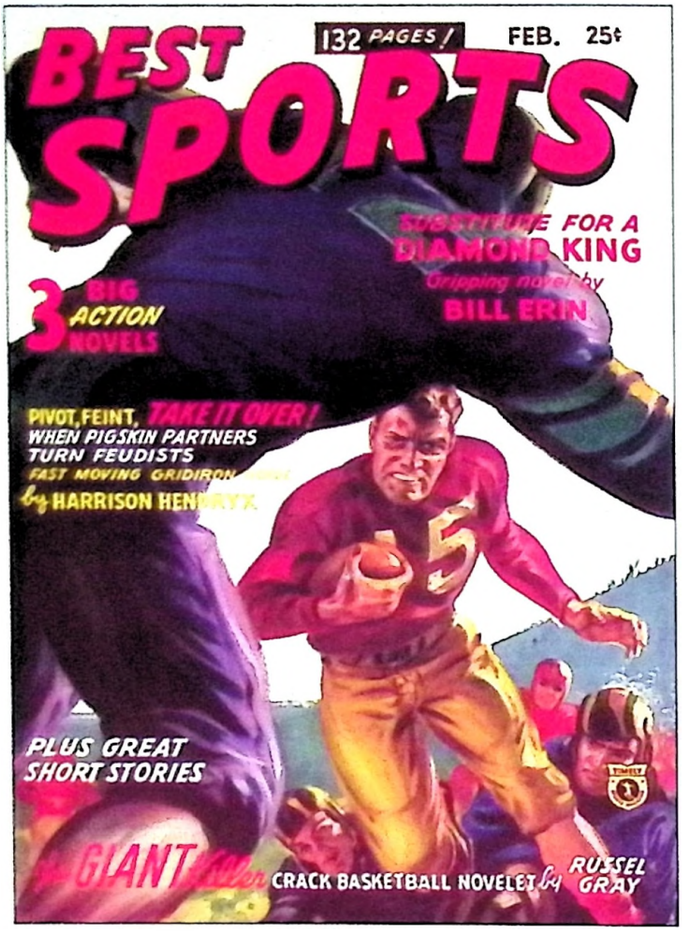
Mystery Tales, June 1938

Thrilling Detective, October 1937

Eerie Mysteries, November 1938



Strangler's Holiday, June 1942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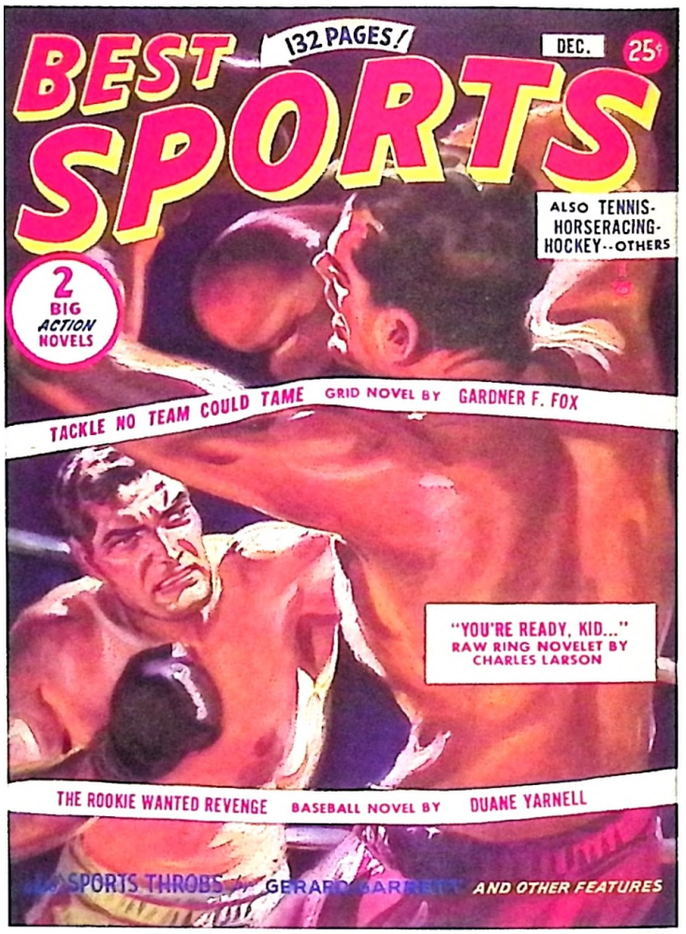
Best Sports, February 1950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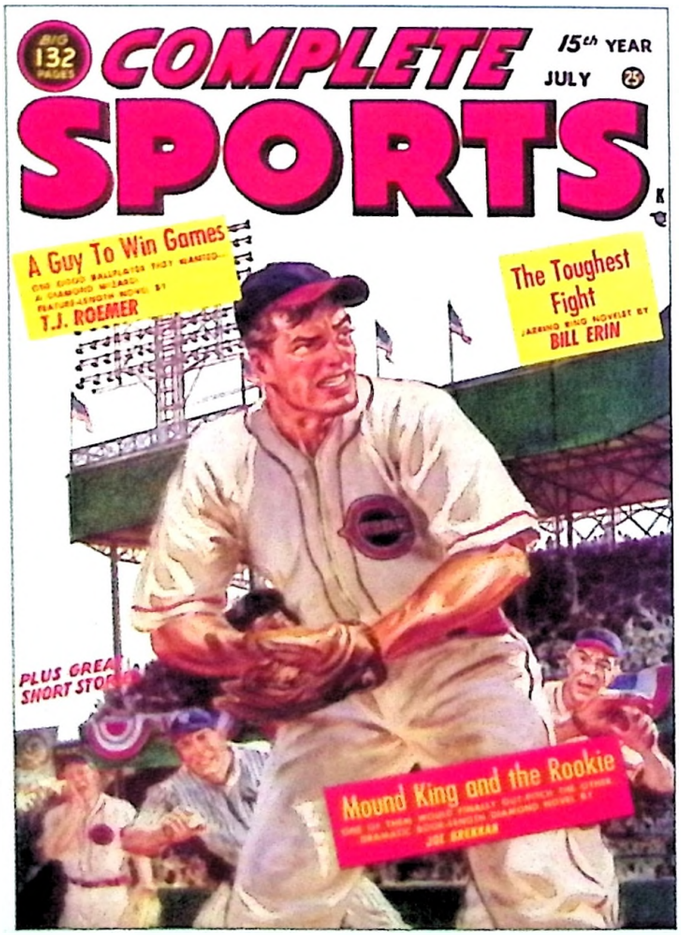
RAW RING NOVELET BY CHARLES LARSON
THE ROOKIE WANTED REVENGE BASEBALL NOVEL BY DUANE YARNELL
SPORTS THROBS
AND OTHER FEATURES

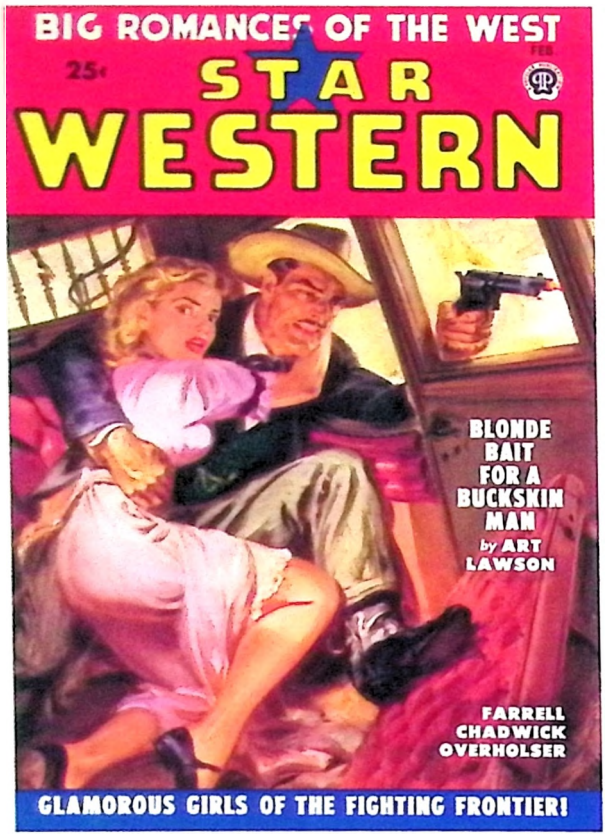
Best Sports, December 1951



Complete Sports, July 1952

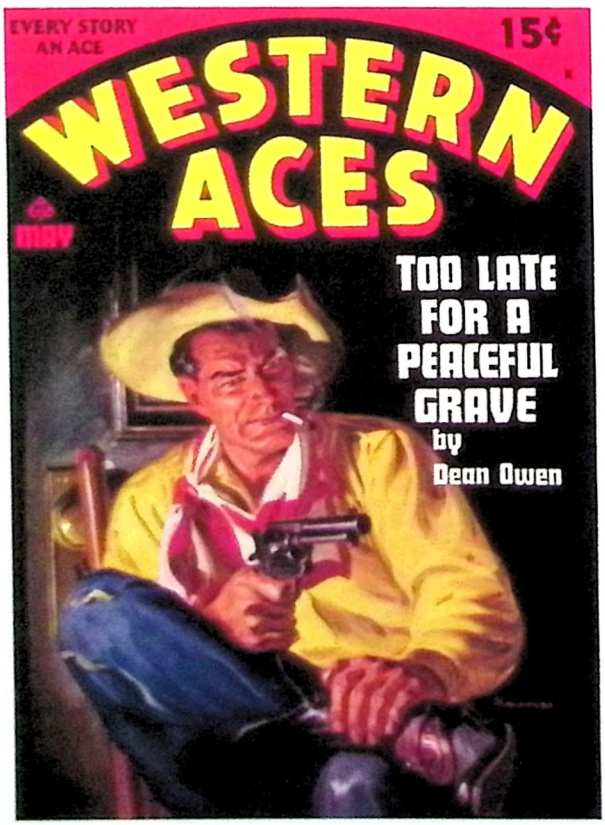
Complete Sports, October 1950

Original painting for *Black Mask*, March 1950 (detail)

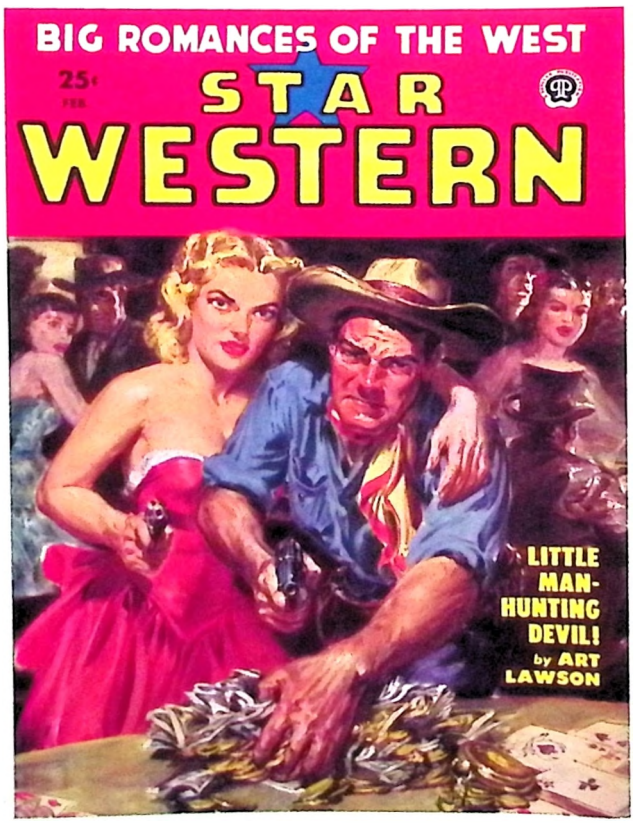


Star Western, February 1952

10 Story Western Magazine, April 1953

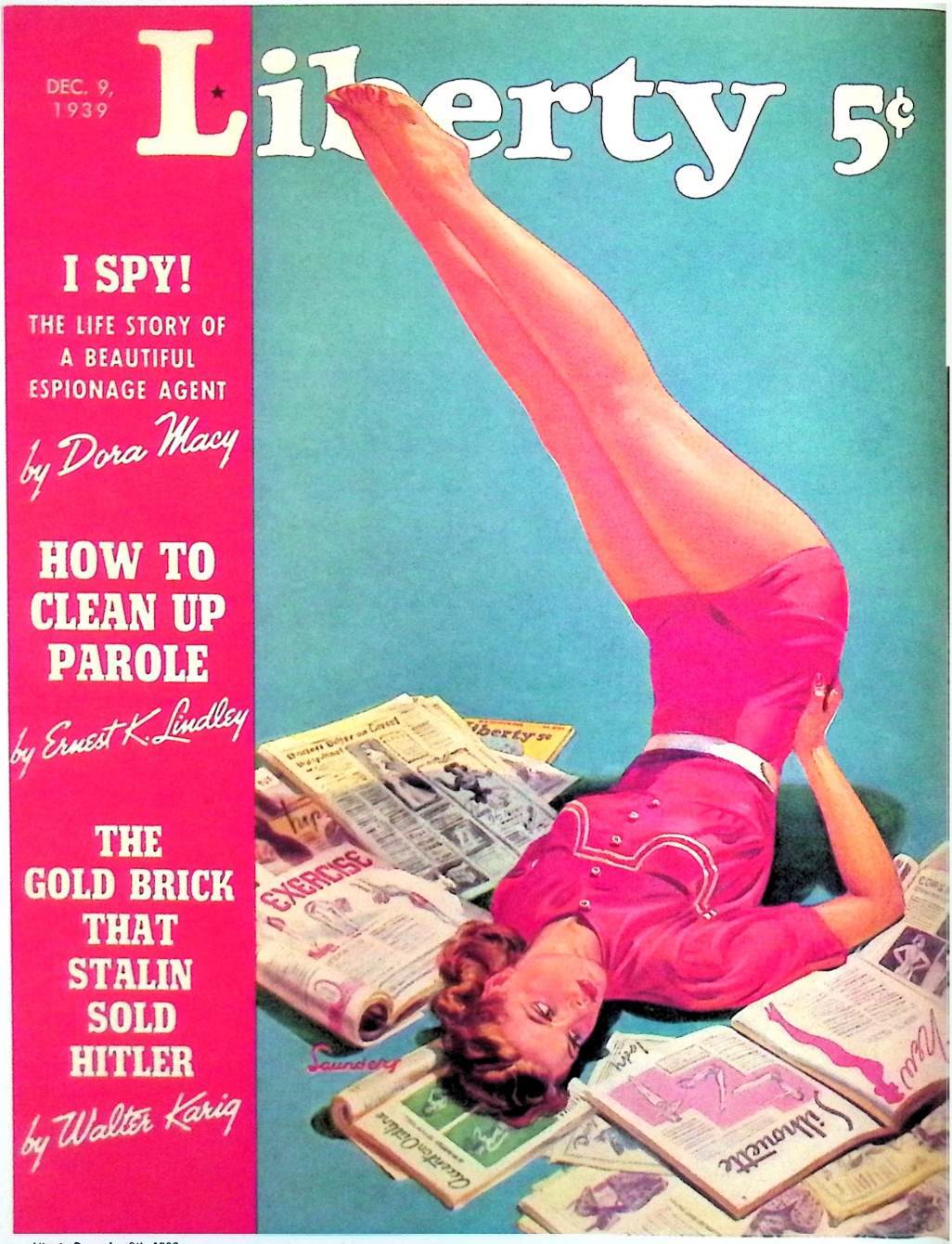


Western Aces, May 1949



Star Western, February 1953

Original painting for *Max Brand's Western Magazine*, May 1952



Liberty, December 9th, 1939

China, 1945. From a personal portfolio of sketches of the artist's war experiences, 1941–1953

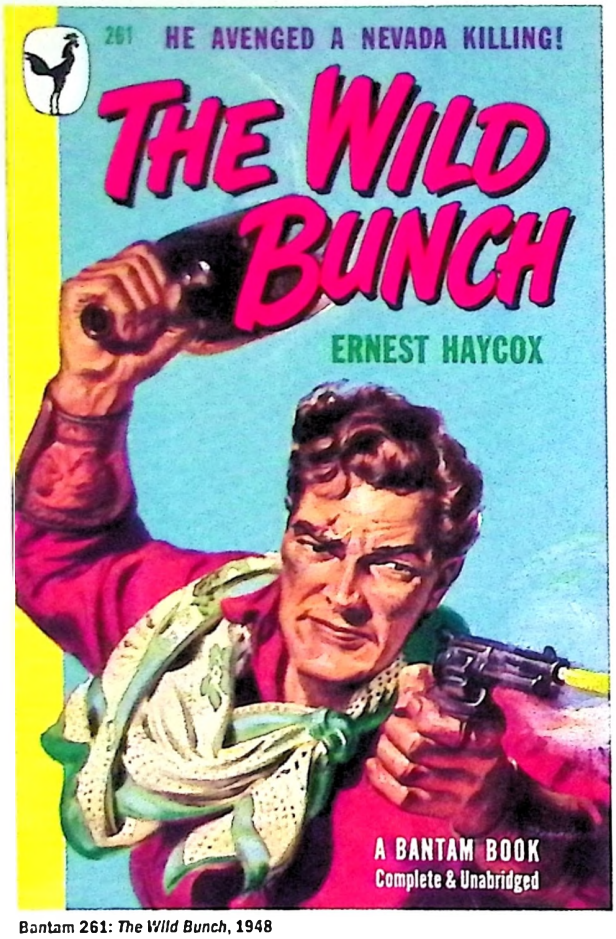
Although times were hard, cheap thrills were in demand. Many Americans were steady readers of the pulps, faithfully watching their newsstands for new issues. This devoted market made the magazines a substantial backbone of popular culture in the era before television. Although black & white movies and radio dramas have a magical power of suggestion, the pulp magazines combined the written word with fantastic colorful paintings to produce a hand-held form of popular entertainment. These little magazines, made of low-quality pulp paper and high-quality full-color covers, provided the literal and visual means to substantiate the magic worlds of radio and movies. The pulps and Norm Saunders enjoyed a long heyday, leading up to the Second World War.

Dad was just painting his first covers for the "slicks," but everything changed with Pearl Harbor. He was a mature man of 36 who had worked his way to the top of his field and was suddenly faced with an historic cataclysm. He spent the war years illustrating his own service experiences. The "slick" magazine editors ran several illustrated stories by "Master Sgt. Norman Saunders," so his career continued even during the war.

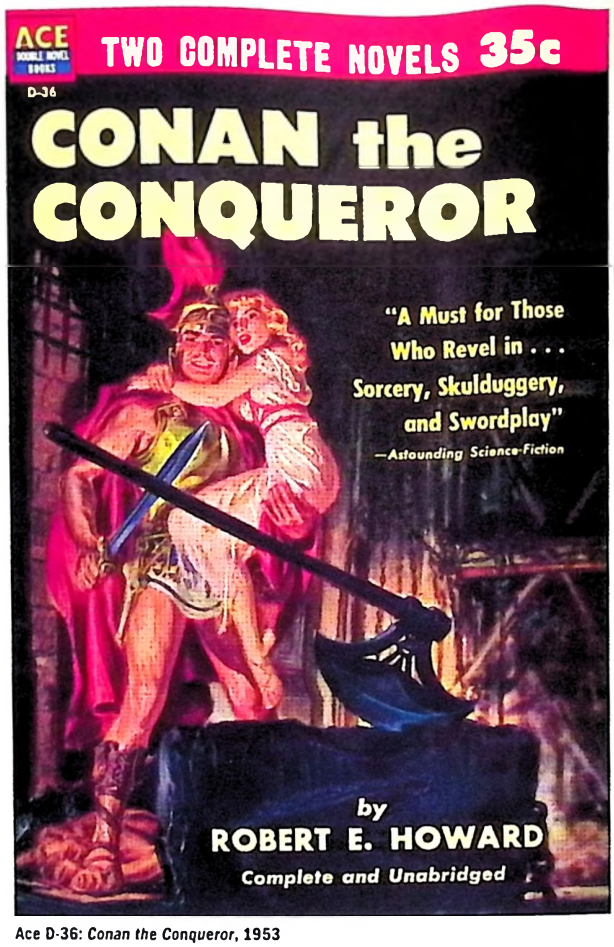
After a year state-side in the MPs, a case of whiskey helped him finagle an overseas transfer to Asia with the Army Corps of Engineers, building the Burma Road to supply the Chinese Nationalist Army of Chiang Kai-Shek. From 1943 to 1945 Norm explored a country and a way of life that profoundly inspired him as "the closest that mankind has ever come to being sensible." It was the hap-

中國婦女
CHINA DOLLS
by
Sergeant Norman Saunders
THINGS could be much worse," my mother always used to say. "Just suppose you had been born a little girl—and in China." She then went on to tell me that the born a Chinese girl could hope for was an early and watery grave. Little girls were taken out and drowned in the Yangtze River, since one girl child in any community was more than enough to glut the market for at least two generations. The Army corrected this early misconception when they decided to broaden my life with travel and sent me to the Orient.
I find, to my surprise, that China is well stocked with little girls and big ones as well. They exist in all the usual variations as regards size, shape and pigmentation—the exception
Hell of crazy in China too!
Hill-billy belles

"China Dolls" by Norman Saunders, from *Today's Woman*, January 1946



Bantam 261: *The Wild Bunch*, 1948



Ace D-36: *Conan the Conqueror*, 1953

piest time of his life. Norm dove into the enormous prospect of documenting the magnificent spectacle of China. He was raised on tales of his father's war experience in the Philippines of 1898, so Norm relished his own opportunity to explore the exotic adventure of the Far-East Asian way of life.

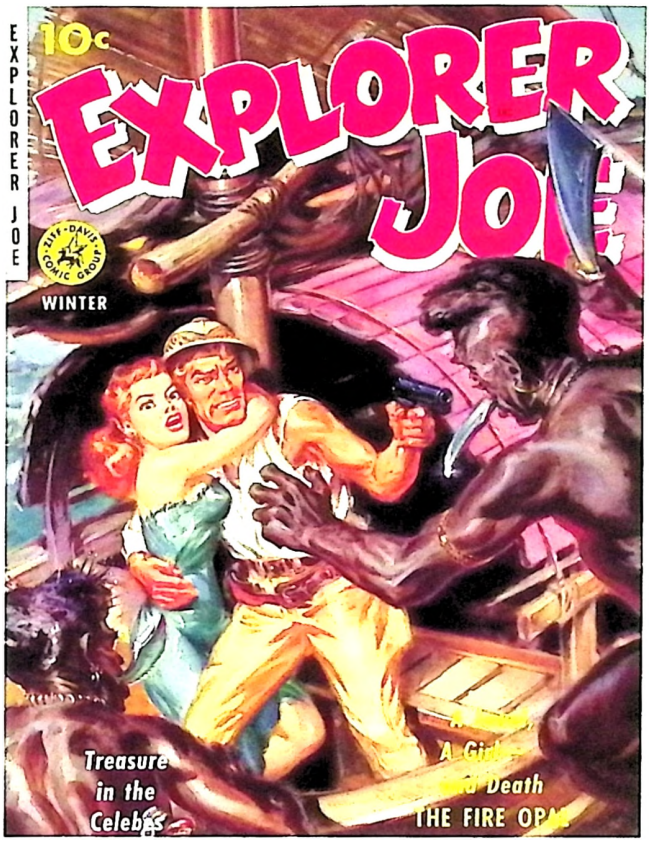
Dad made thousands of detailed watercolors of intriguing scenes that crossed his path along the Burma Road, and in retrospect, he felt these were his best works. I can never fully appreciate the influence of that experience on him, but these masterful artworks are a testimonial to China's inspirational impact. At the end of his life he told me his dream was to be cremated and have his ashes scattered along the Yang Tse River.

After the war, Norm returned to a changed America, where popular culture was trying to keep up with the new tastes. The pulps were still selling and Dad continued to find work with them until the end of the 1950s, but the publishers saw the writing on the wall. They had to repackage their products to keep in business. Many titles were ended, merged or reformatted as paperbacks, comic books or mens magazines, and Norm Saunders followed his old contacts from the pulps into each of these experimental new formats.

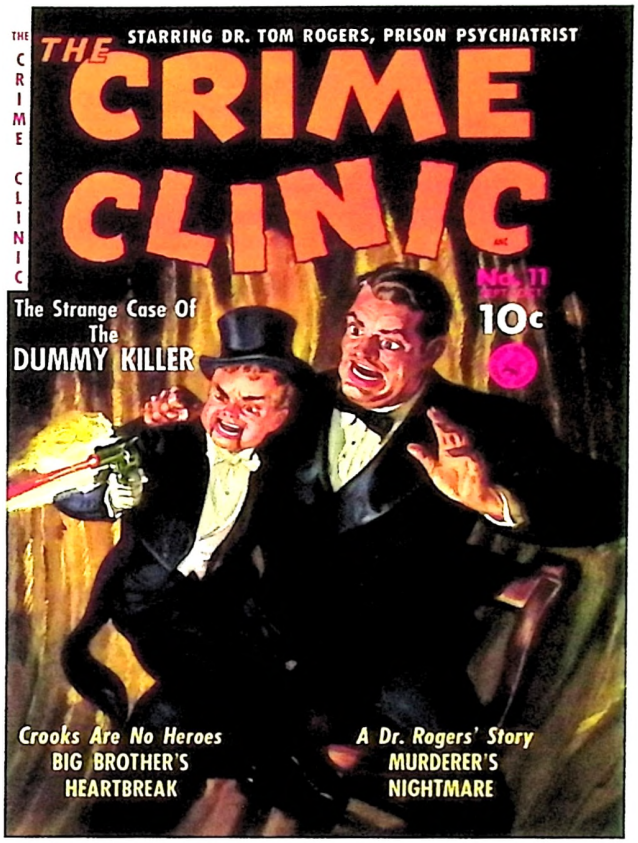
From 1948 to 1954 Dad painted covers for the earliest paperbacks of Ace, Bantam and others. This new product combined cover art and literature that both reflected hard-boiled social realism, and was *the* major success of the Post-War publishing industry.

The features of one particular beauty began to appear in all of Norm's work at this time. She was a young Greek model named Ellene Politis, and in 1947 they were married. They bought a four- story brownstone for $25,000 on 104th Street in a racially mixed section of Harlem and started to raise a family.

Norm and Ellene Saunders, September 1946. (On their wedding day)



Explorer Joe, December 1951

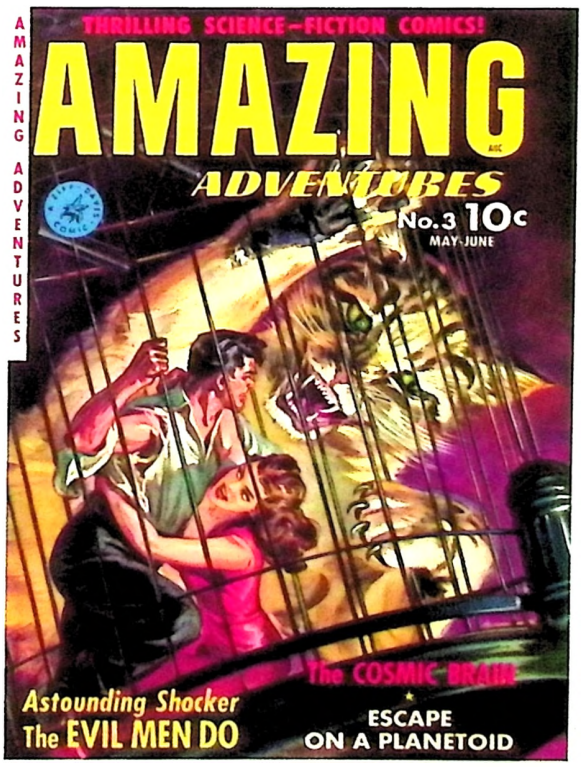


The Crime Clinic, September-October 1951

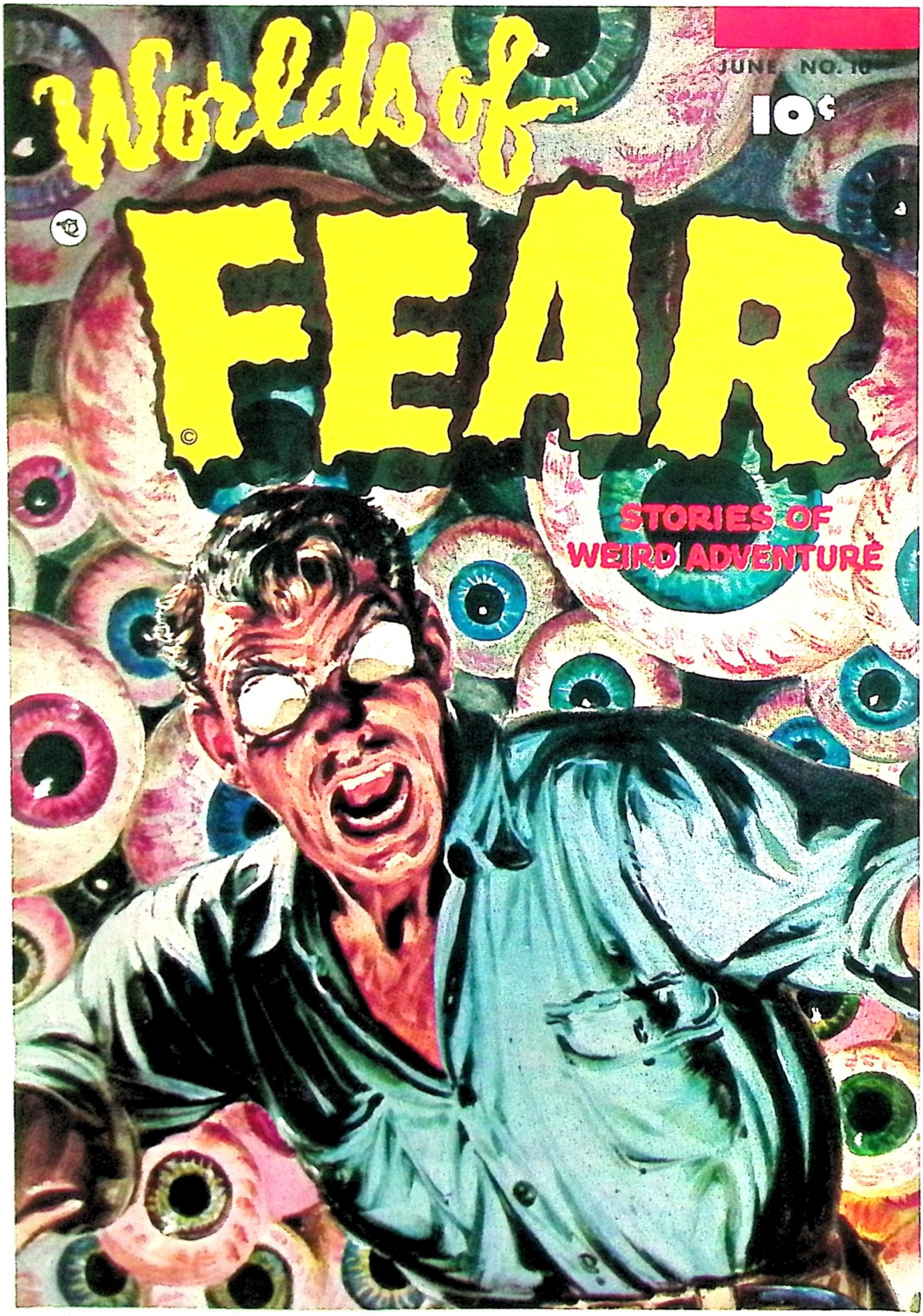
At that same time Norm's old publishers also sent him many jobs painting covers for comic books.

Comics were still evolving in these early years, and they often had full-color covers painted by pulp artists along with stories filled with the same shocking pulp fiction thrills. This time, however, these products were being distributed along with innocent kiddie comics, and this shared marketing raised many censorial eyebrows! The fact that Dad's covers looked realistic made their horror all the more gruesome. Letters of parental complaint led to a public campaign for the government to regulate "the trash we expose our children to!" Concerned with the threat of direct government regulation, the various comics publishers banded together in 1954 to create the Comics Code Authority, a self-regulating body designed to specify exactly how far a publisher could go in depicting violence, monsters, and crime in comics. While the CCA had no direct legal authority over any comics publishers, magazine distributors often refused to carry any comics that did not display the CCA seal of approval. This self-censorship had a chilling effect on the entire industry, and overnight an entire genre of horror and crime comics ceased to exist. Norm was effectively out of the comics business.

Dad continued to do freelance work with package design, calendars, jigsaw puzzles and any other illustration jobs he could find that weren't taken over by color photography or concerned politicians.

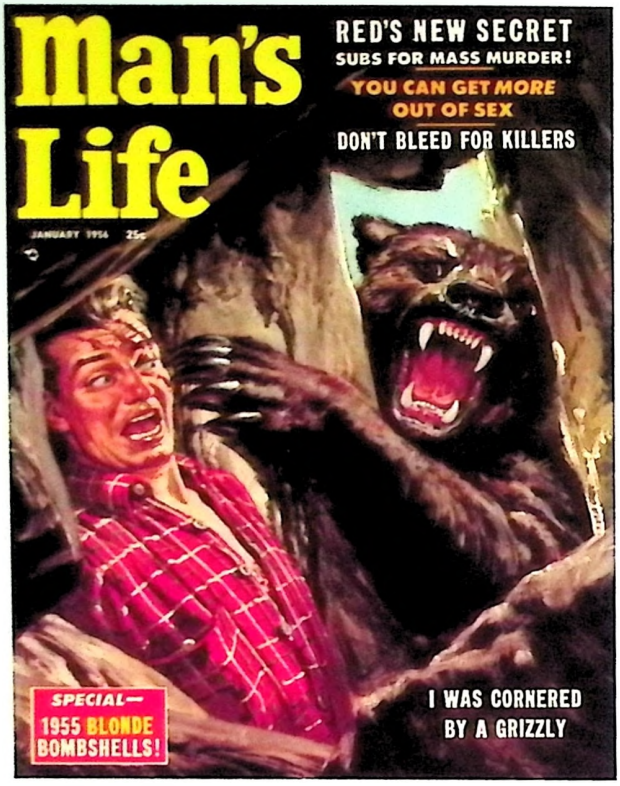


Amazing Adventures, May-June 1951



Worlds of Fear, June 1953

Original painting for Strange Stories *from Another World*, December 1952.
Photo courtesy of Richard Halegua, Comic Art & Graffix Gallery

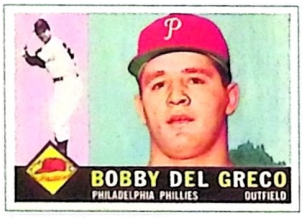


Man's Life, January 1956

EXPOSE: WHY HOMOSEXUALS REFUSE TO BE CURED
MAN'S BOOK
PERIODICAL
ANALYZE YOUR SEX POTENTIAL: DO YOU MEASURE UP?
HELPLESS BRIDES OF SATAN'S ICE MONSTER
CONFESSION: I BOOK WEEKEND LUST EXCURSIONS
BRING OUT THE BOUND ANGEL OF SLAUGHTER

Man's Book, April 1966

When Fawcetts and Columbia began publishing magazines like *True* and *Saga*, and *Real*, Norm produced a large body of work for these men's adventure magazines. They showed the same kinds of manly action adventures that were featured in Hollywood films of that time like, *Fort Apache, The Big Sky,* or *The Guns of Navarone.* Dad felt these were geared towards men who had served in the war but had seen no action, so exciting tales of heroic deeds satisfied their frustrated fantasies. By 1962 these magazines had gone over the top into a whole new genre that was aimed at men's frustrated sexual fantasies. *New Man, Man's Book* and *Men Today.*



Bobby Del Greco, 1960

There were very few magazines after 1960 that still used painted covers, so Dad accepted these jobs and he left his works unsigned and uncredited. Nevertheless, he still painted them in his familiar style, so they're easy to identify. Dad actually got a good laugh out of doing such outlandish burlesques, mocking puritan clichés of dastardly wickedness.

One of the oddball jobs Dad took in the late fifties was at Topps Bubblegum Company, doing corrections on color photographs of baseball and football players who had been traded to new teams after their cards were ready to go to press. Without time to rephotograph the players, Topps needed someone to come to their printing plant and fix a mess of complicated switch-a-roos! A Cleveland Indian uniform and cap had to be painted onto a former Pittsburgh Pirate, while a Pittsburgh Steeler had to become a Cleveland Brown.

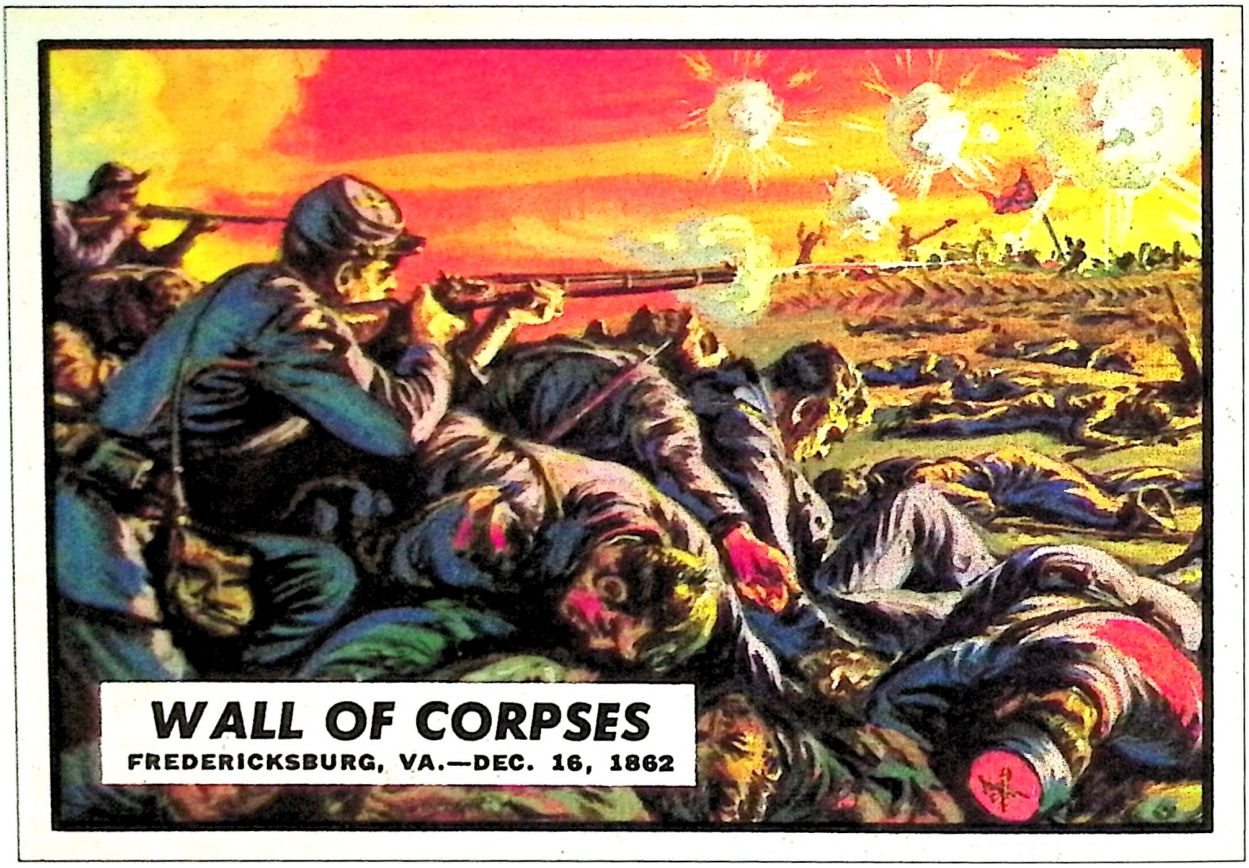
His covers had once been enough to sell 100,000 copies of a pulp, and then he found himself being hired as an anonymous retoucher. Nowadays they'd use a computer program, but in 1958 Dad took his paint box, an old, spattered green tin tackle box filled with paint tubes and a palette, his "nose dabber" (Kleenex) and a handful of Windsor Newton #6 Sable watercolor brushes, hop on the subway and ride over the East River to the Topps offices in Brooklyn. He always brought his glasses and green plastic poker-dealer visor, his big Sherlock Holmes magnifying glass, his hip flask of gin and sometimes even me! I'd sit on a stool and try not to be a pest, watching him doctor a dozen cards an hour, standing at an office table and muttering spicy old ditties to himself. "Barney Google, with his goo-goo-googly eyes! Barney Google had a wife three times his size!"—"K-k-k-katie! Oh, beautiful Katie. You're the only g-g-g-girl that I adore!"—"Today's the day to give babies away for a half a pound of tea, so if you know any ladies that want any babies, send 'em around to me!" Dad's love of the cornball left no room for snooty pretensions. He was hilariously irreverent! "Look, kiddo, I don't have any time to chew the rag with a snot-nosed brat, so don't get your ass in an uproar! Just sit on your hands and button your lip! Remember I love you madly, but I don't want to get any madder at you than I already am!" I was proud of my "Specialist" Dad, being called in to do emergency art jobs that no one else could do! The staff artists at

OPPOSITE: Original painting for *New Man*, December 1970 (detail)

Original painting for unknown men's adventure magazine, circa 1960

SULTANA

Original painting for unknown men's adventure magazine, circa 1960



Civil War card #34, "Wall of Corpses," 1961

Topps treated him like he was the Maestro! He laughed it off and loved every minute of it.

Eventually Topps got the idea to make better use of Norm by having him do a Non-Sports Series. There was a big hubbub in 1961 about the centennial of the Civil War. The Civil Rights movement was on everyone's mind and there was a morbid curiosity about the "War To Free The Slaves," so Topps gave Dad a pile of rough sketches to get things rolling. He pasted tracing papers on them to redraw more dynamic compositions or he suggested other more dramatic scenes. Dad used Matthew Brady's infamous battlefield photos for research.

I knew the book was "not for children," so I started looking at it as soon as his back was turned. One day he caught me with the book, but instead of scolding, he sat with me in stunned reverence, describing the fuller implications of each detailed photograph, leaning over my shoulder, I was shocked to see my Dad's tears splotting on the page before me, as he wept at the pitiful waste of human lives.

After Topps OK'd his compositions, he sliced up some Bainbridge illustration boards into 8 x 10 inch pieces and marked off little 4 x 6 inch central spaces for the artwork. This left a 2 inch border of neutral space where the production staff scribbled red and blue pencil instructions and registration marks for the printing process. Dad would sharpen an Ebony pencil to a razor fine point and transfer each revised sketch to its own little board. He intentionally did this by eye, without using any mechanical aid, because "the drawn line has more pizzazz than a mechanical tracing," and he took advantage of this final redrawing to further refine the composition to suit his taste.

Flag Midgies card, "Mexico," 1962

The *Civil War* cards depicted battle scenes of such bloody realism that Topps was flooded with letters of complaint. They decided to halt further distribution and to produce an "educational" series instead: *Flags of All Nations*, and later, after a similar reaction to *Battle!*, they issued *Flag Midgies*. Although the United Nations was a hot topic in those Cold War years, no kids bought flag cards, but Topps never expected them to. It was just a crafty legal defense, in case they wound up in court and needed to show some edifying product to redeem their public image.

Original painting for *Mars Attacks*, card number 10, 1962. Collection of Randy Pratt

The *Mars Attacks!* series was Dad's next big sensation! It showed us all the worst nightmares that kids could ever imagine about the world-wide mayhem of a Martian invasion!

On the day that Dad had first discussed the project, I had been given a plastic Captain Video space helmet by a friend. I'd never seen another kid anywhere with such a cool thing and I couldn't wait to wear it on the block. But, by bedtime it was gone! I looked for it all over the place and I finally found it in Dad's studio, up on the 3rd floor of our brownstone. He had set it up on his table, posing with a skull inside it! That skull was a plaster cast Dad bought from his art supply store on Broadway and 95th Street. He needed a model to study under various lighting conditions, and he created the entire invading horde of Martians from that one skull, as well as any fried earthlings that happened to get in their way!

Toy Space Helmet, 1962

The whole family and neighborhood friends loved to pose for Dad. He often dressed us in stage clothing and directed our acting roles under theatrical lighting. Our dog "Cindy" and I got to be zapped into ashes by a merciless Martian. At first Dad painted the scene with the dog roasted into a hideous charred skeleton, but Topps made Dad retouch the dog with a coat of fur. I've always wondered if the owner of that painting knew there was a more "x-rated" dog underneath that revision!

After we kids were all packed off to school, Dad's first work-shift began, between 9AM to 3PM. After 3PM he would give us snacks and do the shopping and cooking, the serving and cleaning up, the bathing and bedding of his four kids and pets. When we were all tucked away, he would start his evening work-shift. From 9PM to Midnight, Dad put in his most focused work. I would usually peek at his current paintings every evening before bed and sometimes he would point out some detail that was a "lucky piece of business. Lots of artists get lucky breaks, but only a smart one knows when to leave 'em alone!" But I also knew that I should leave him alone if he

Original revised painting for *Mars Attacks*, card number 10, 1962

Original revised painting for *Mars Attacks*, card number 10, 1962

Battle card number 24, "Trapped!", 1965

Saunders poses for *Battle*, 1965

didn't initiate the conversation. It was better not to interrupt his concentration during his late-night work schedule.

Dad would take a last drag on his cigarette and go to work. Invariably, his cigarette burned down to the filter, dangling in his heavy glass ash tray for the next hour, until he'd "come up for air" Although he was a life-long chain smoker, who always needed a lit cigarette, whenever he painted he could go for hours without a smoke. This phenomenon amused him as another example of the absurdity of the human mind.

Dad was astonishingly good at graphics and hand-painted lettering. He'd use a "blue-line" non-photographable pencil to block-in carefully spaced-out letters and then he'd swiftly paint-in his finished job. This was particularly impressive because of the minute size of the original artworks and the fact that Dad was getting so old, he suffered from poor eyesight and cataracts.

He invented and built his own optical aid device, which stacked up three consecutively more-powerful magnifying glasses under a 100 watt lamp. The contraption extended over his table and was mounted on a heavy floor stand. His adjustable drafting table was set at the height of a lectern and he stood on a swiveling barstool. By adjusting his optical device so that it was suspended before his eyes, he would stare at his tiny artworks for nine hours a day with the intensity of a hopped-up toy-maker in his workshop, putting the eyelashes on Pinocchio. He gracefully brushed in the tiniest details with a sweep of his microscopic sable-hair brushes. He knew a million tricks for using bridges, french-curves and triangles, to produce slickly controlled effects which flowed from his brush as gracefully as an Olympic skater. He explained each technique to me as he employed them but they required a lot of practice, and I suspect many of his tricks are now lost forever.

Original painting for *Frankenstein Valentines*, 1966. Gouache on board, 7" x 5"

Dad preferred to paint from observation of actual objects, so he arranged elaborate set-ups to refer to while he painted, and he always used dramatic lighting. He even used colored filters to create lighting affects which enhanced the illusionism of his rendering. Many of his works feature a "hot light" (red, orange or yellow) glowing on one side of the object and a "cold light" (purple, blue or green) shining on the other side. This "hot-to-cold" color scheme is a traditional painter's technique for adding dimensional depth. It's based on the visual phenomenon that cool colors appear on surfaces that move away from the viewer's eye, while the brilliant potency of "hot" colors seem to jump out and confront the viewer's eye, but Norm intensified this principle to make his illustrations more eye-catching.

Within a few minutes, Dad could transform a preliminary doodle into something that looked alive. He'd flesh-out the character, add some volume to the objects and touch-up the structural details in a flurry of intense focus. I loved to watch Dad work. He'd start by splashing around some "blocked-in colors" to get focused and then he'd rapidly make a seemingly reckless and abrupt color change that appeared like a mistake at first. If I squealed "Dad! What are you doing!?! You're gonna ruin it with that dirty color!", he'd mutter an aside without losing his concentration, "Wait a minute. See where I'm going with this." If I was patient, his

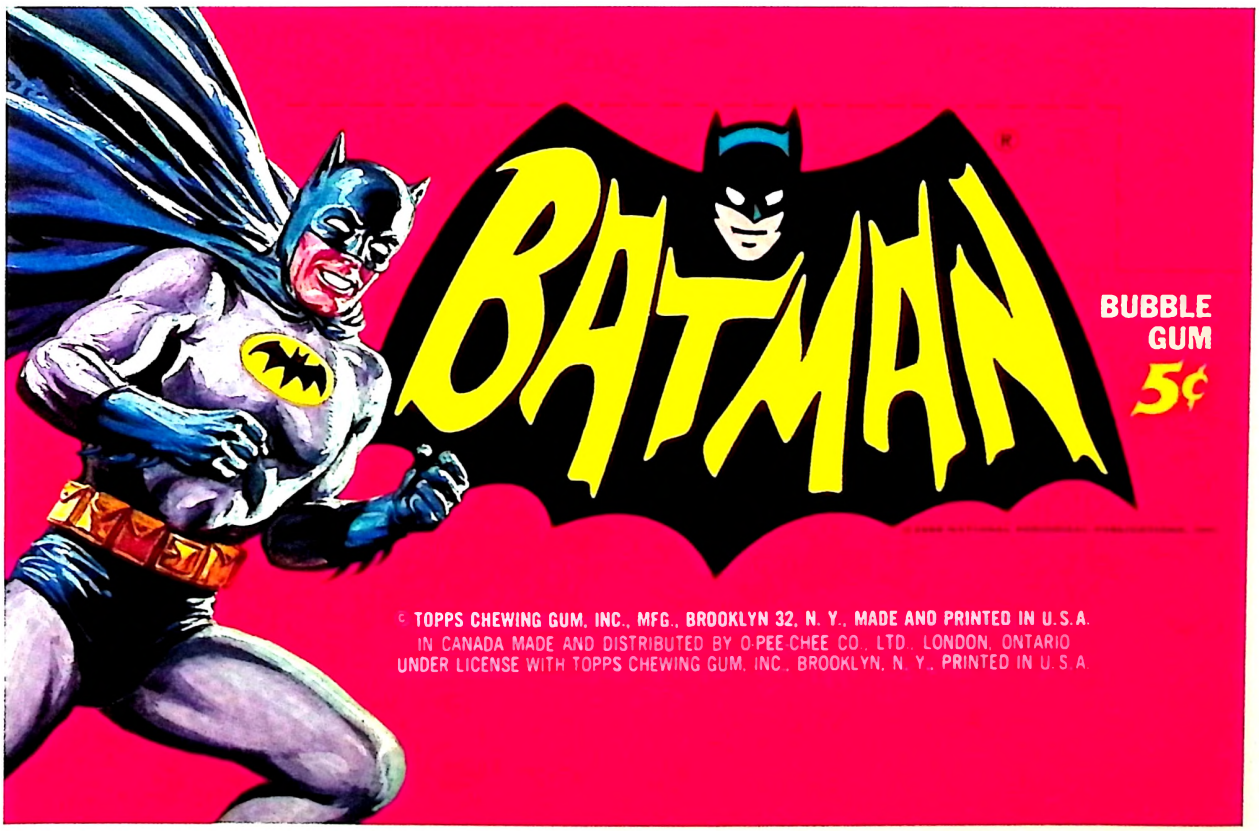
paintings would magically resolve before my eyes into realistic illusions. It was a thrill to watch Dad's imagination bring something to life, because, no matter how bumpy the ride, he'd always land at the other end in some amazing illusion.

Dad used two white porcelain palettes each with a grid of 64 teaspoon wells. Before painting, he removed the saran wrap that kept the paint moist from his last session, and squeezed out paint tubes of any additional casein and watercolors needed. He adjusted their fluid consistency by squirting water from a turkey-baster, sucked from a gallon-sized pickle jar that he kept on a table beside his drafting table to dunk his brush in after each stroke.

He kept a stack of typewriter paper handy for grooming the paint-laden brush tip and wiping it off after each stroke. Once the top sheet of this stack was filled with slops and drips and splats, he would remove it—but rather than crumple it up, he saved them in another pile. Once every month or so, he would inspect this pile—holding up each page to earnestly appreciate the random beauty of the abstract compositions he had mindlessly generated. "Hmm! This one's as good as any Pollock!" After selecting his favorites, he filed them away as respectfully as any of his artworks.

Dad followed the art world news and reviews in the *New York Times* and attended the important museum shows and he even took day trips to Philadelphia, Boston and D.C. to catch any major shows. The Metropolitan Museum was his favorite collection. He went about twenty times a year. It always started the same way. I'd be eating Sunday morning breakfast by myself and he'd walk into the kitchen and announce, "I'll be going to the Met today, so anybody that wants to tag along should be ready to go in ten minutes!" He would never go alone. We always went together. I loved to study those master works with Dad. Great art was the only product of mankind that my father treated with the solemn awe he otherwise reserved for nature. As we walked through the museum, I listened to his ideas, which grew into spontaneous public lectures as a crowd of art lovers drew around. Many times he'd conclude his thoughts and walk away from a painting and the group would break into heartfelt applause. Those museum trips inspired me to love art.

Dad had always been a fervent advocate of sharpening one's creative mind by detailed observation of the world around him. "Keep your wits about you! You never know when something will come in handy!" Our walks around town were routinely delayed by his spontaneous inspiration to stop and sketch. I'd sit on a stoop and pick my nose and wait for Dad to finish some astonishing drawing. He considered visual alertness to be a vital human survival skill that helped him to thrive in life's harsh jungle. His mastery of observation may have been his greatest artistic talent. Dad trained me to look for new ways to walk down the same street, and to carry my head mindfully, to look around and to keep a pad and pencil handy, to make sketched notations of everything, and to be curious about how everything works.


BATMAN
BUBBLE GUM
5¢
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Display box lid for *Batman*, 1966

Original painting for *Wacky Packages*: "Creep," 1974

"If you don't have a pencil 'n' paper, just drink it all in with your eyes and hurry home to make a sketch from memory! That's how Robert Henri use to do it! It's all useful material for some future picture or for getting out of some scrape! Let's say some punks jump you from the alley. If you're just walking like a zombie, they're gonna clobber you! ***BUT***, if you're observant, you'd notice there was a garbage can right behind you! Everything can be used as a weapon to defend yourself in an emergency! You can grab that garbage can lid and whack'em on the head! Always keep your eyes open!" Walking around a cluttered Harlem street with Norman Saunders was to see it all come alive with his colorful imagination! "Notice how the traffic light is counter-balanced by those wires from the lamp-post. It's plastered with some nutty handbills, and those ratty sneakers some kids tossed up there, dangling by their shoestrings! It seems like an outrageous abstract sculpture, but you have to know what you can use and what to ignore! That's what makes life and art interesting!"

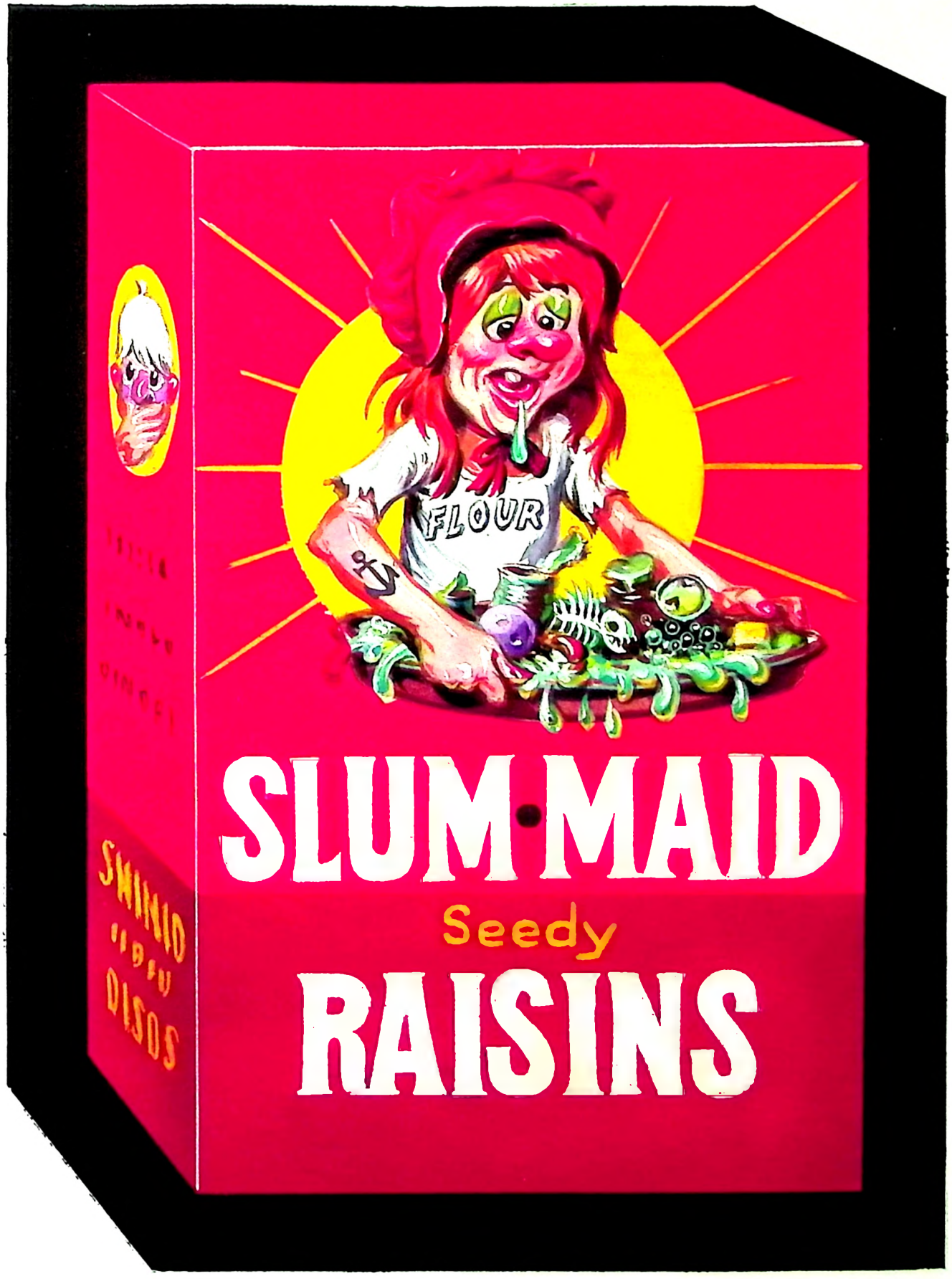
Topps and Norm Saunders continued to collaborate on an incredible variety of gum-selling products, most of which reflected popular trends on kiddie TV— *Batman, Monster Valentines, Ugly Stickers, Nutty Initials, Rat Fink, Mad Foldees, Insult Cards, Monster Alphabet, Groovy Names, Flower Power Alphabet*...I can't remember them all, but they usually had a new project every few months throughout the sixties.

Dad's lifelong journey from a backwoods one-room schoolhouse doodler to a famous New York illustrator had reached the retirement age. He knew he was a great illustrator, he loved his craft and he was proud to belong to the noble tradition of painters. But instead of fading off into irrelevance, destiny delivered one last wacky package to Norm's doorstep! In 1967 there came one more final painting project that proved to be the most popular of his lifetime.

Dad was a life-long cynic, so he was the perfect advocate for skewering braggarts, especially when they were advertisers, puffed up with boastful hot air! Norm did most of the cooking, shopping and housekeeping in our family, so he was always over-worked. His frustrations often led to public scenes at the Food-A-Rama grocery store on Broadway. To my howlingly painful embarrassment, he would pick up a jar of Skippy Peanut Butter and proclaim, "NEW AND IMPROVED FORMULA, EH? WHAT THEY SHOULD REALLY PRINT ON THESE JARS IS 'WE FOUND A CHEAPER WAY TO MAKE THIS CRAP, AND WE'RE GONNA SELL IT FOR MORE!"

The *Wacky Pack's* popular success was very satisfying to him, especially after storing up so many years of contempt for dishonest media men. He finally got paid to paint and to complain at the same time. It was the perfect job! Here at long last, he finally had a soapbox to preach on, and the creative freedom to say what he liked and an immense audience to entertain with different Wacky projects for the next 12 years.

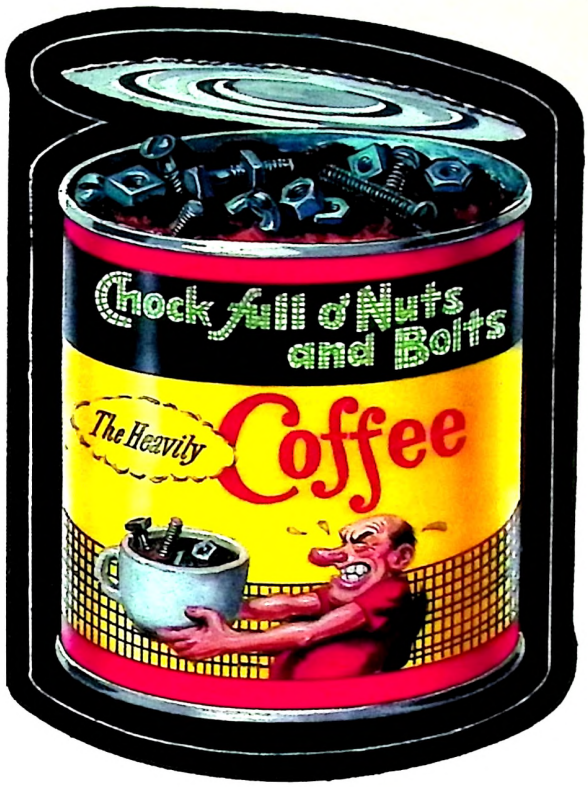
The Topps office was a no-frills filthy old factory building, all smudged-up with printer's ink and the stench of snubbed-out cigars, spittoons and pencil shavings, a perfect reflection of their penny-pinching low-overhead approach to business. But one day in 1977, Dad went in to deliver some of the last wackies, and he was stunned to see they'd redone the whole place with polished conference tables, hardwood paneling and lavish interior decorations. When Dad asked, "What the hell happened here?" they said, "I hope you like it, because you paid for all this!" That finally brought it home for him. He calculated that *Wacky Packages* made Topps millions of dollars, but his only benefit, beyond the $50 freelance fee for each artwork, was the pride in knowing his work was so popular. He longed for recognition, just as all artists do, but in his case these were no delusions of grandeur—for those "fifteen minutes" (1967 to 1980) his *Wacky Packs* really were as famous as the Beatles. Topps must be strictly possessive,



Original painting for *Wacky Packages*: "Slum-Maid," 1967

Wacky Posters, "Hawaiian Punks," 1973

New York Magazine, October, 1973.



Original painting for *Wacky Packages*: "Chock Full o'Nuts and Bolts," 1967

because even Tim Burton's 1996 movie, *Mars Attacks,* gave Norm no credit.

As Dad would say, "That's just the way it goes, kiddo! I wouldn't know what to do with that much money if I had it! As far as the fame goes, I won't care about posterity when I'm dead, which should be about any minute now! That's for you to worry about, David! I had a lot of good clean fun! I could do whatever I wanted. I could stay home and paint all day and not have some god-damned front-office-guy breathing down my neck!" Despite this frustration, it was still a thrill for Dad to watch the *Wacky Pack* fad triumphantly acknowledged on the TV news and the popular press. In fact, when *New York* magazine ran a cover article on the *Wacky Packs* on October 1, 1973, Norm said, "Well, after 50 years in the business, I finally made it to the SLICKS!"

It's no wonder that Dad would smile and say, "My favorite, I think was the *Wacky Packs.* I had a successful career as an artist, but the first time my kids thought an artist was important was when I put out a bubblegum card! I liked doing them because my kids were finally proud of their ol' man!"

Norm Saunders brought a rich heritage of painting to many generations. As long as 20th Century American illustration is collected, the pulps, paperbacks, men's magazines, comics and trading cards with the Norman Saunders touch will always be the classics. The creativity in his paintings will enrich our culture for generations to come. His love of painting shows through in every one. His saucy sense of humor and open-minded interest in life, and his scorn for pomposity, made him a charmingly wise and outrageous character. He understood the value of the care and hard work he put into his creative efforts, and he knew that he was one of America's best illustrators. His spirit left his body on March 7th, 1989. As I go on through life without him, it's hard to always miss him, but I'm lucky he left behind so many great paintings which are filled with a colorful spirit that I'm proud to say was my ol' man!

—© *2008 David Saunders*

David Saunders is a noted pulp historian and long-time contributor to this magazine. His new book on his father, *Norman Saunders*, has just been released by The Illustrated Press.

Norman and David Saunders, 1980

Cover illustration for *Tarzan and the Castaways*, 1964. Brush and ink on paper, 9" x 12". Collection of Dr. David Winiewicz

Frank Frazetta at work in his studio, 1994

Frank Frazetta's Little Miracles

by Dr. David Winiewicz

The oil paintings of Frank Frazetta have touched and enchanted a worldwide audience. Literally millions of artbooks have been sold in the past 25 years. Hundreds of thousands of prints and lithographs are in circulation and the demand is seemingly endless. A bushel of awards and honors of every shape and variety has accompanied all of this financial success and popularity. Movie stars and other celebrities have made the pilgrimage to visit Frazetta on his estate in Pennsylvania. A great museum now stands on his estate as a testament to his lifelong achievement.

Frazetta is a truly great painter who stands in a long classical tradition of great artists like Michaelangelo, Raphael, Rembrandt, and Goya. History will prove this point. However, there is another facet of Frazetta's genius that is even more remarkable than his gift as a painter, and this point is recognized and appreciated by discerning connoisseurs throughout the world... Namely, Frazetta is one of the most remarkable draftsman who has ever lived. His drawings in pen and ink are simply unmatched for their creative artistry. There is, of course, a cultural bias in the Western world that holds painting to be more inherently valuable than ink drawings. This bias is not shared by the Eastern world, where ink drawing and calligraphy are esteemed even more than oil paintings. The greatness of art should not be judged by its medium but by its degree of quality, its inherent expressive power. Frazetta thoroughly agrees with this sentiment: "I have many ink drawings that are far better than most of my paintings. Drawings are very difficult because you can't make a mistake. It requires a great deal of concentration and discipline. For example, drawing a simple silhouette is difficult because it has to be perfect. One mistake and the whole effect is ruined."

Let me make my point by introducing a little historical context. Frazetta began as a true child prodigy; his artistic gifts were recognized very early in life and nurtured. His childhood was steeped in the visual wonders of comic books, pulps, comic strips, toys, and anything that had a touch of fantasy about it. He absorbed everything, and he loved to draw. He drew continuously. He produced countless little self-made comics and a large, full-color children's story of his character, *Snowman*, that ran to 60 pages. He began working in the comic book field in 1944 and continued to draw stories until 1955. His pen and brush technique got stronger and stronger throughout this period—amazingly so. By the time he was done, Frazetta had produced some of the finest art ever seen in the medium of comics. For the next 7 years, Frazetta worked as the main "ghost" artist on Al Capp's *L'il Abner* comicstrip. In the early 1960s, Frazetta decided to break away from the treadmill of strip art production. His dream was to be a painter and enter the higher levels of art. He wanted respect and he wanted success. In the comic business he didn't get the type of acknowledgement he was searching for. The comic business was an artistic ghetto. Everyone believed that comic book artists were at the very bottom of the financial and aesthetic ladder. The upper rungs were occupied by the well-paid illustrators and painters; that was the goal he wanted.

Frazetta began to paint covers for ACE paperbacks in the

Frank with original cover painting, 1992. (*Heavy Metal*, November 1990)

early 1960s and produced a series of varied and truly charming images. At this same time he was offered a "prestige" assignment by the editors of Canaveral Press to illustrate a series of books by the famous Edgar Rice Burroughs. This was the moment Frank had been waiting for. Now he could show the world what he was capable of and use all his creative juice to display the power of his imagination and his unique inventiveness. In the opinion of many, this is the ultimate high point in Frazetta's career. He produced a series of drawings for three hardbacks: *At the Earth's Core* (1962), *Tarzan and the Castaways* (1965), and *Tarzan: Master of Adventure* (1965). Other books on the ERB Pellucidar series were planned, but never published. Frazetta produced a total of 27 full drawings and several spot illustrations for the Canaveral Press. Ironically, Frazetta was badly used by this company and paid a big price. Frank clarifies: "I was screwed beautifully by those bandits. They made promises and never came through. I did extra drawings for them for books that were never published. I got paid peanuts, and never received further money. To top it off, they kept most of my art. I was only able to get four drawings back. When I complained, they threatened to sue. I was an artist; what did I know about lawyers and hidden clauses in contracts. I wised up really fast. That situation would never happen again."

Frazetta's drawings during this time are nothing short of miraculous. No one had ever seen anything like them before. Look at the great draftsmen of the past, e.g. Michaelangelo, Bernini, Rembrandt, all the way to the relatively recent efforts of Daniel Vierge, Joseph Clement Coll, Pyle, Wyeth, Matania, Mucha, Hal Foster, Lou Fine, and Alex Raymond. Frazetta established a new level of creative achievement for the pen and brush. During lunch at the opening of the first Frazetta Museum in 1986, Frazetta and I discussed the Canaveral Press drawings. Frazetta commented: "I knew when I was doing them that they would be priceless. I realized this when I was drawing the image of the big bear in the snow. This is a very simple image, but the image started to take on a strange quality. It started to just come alive before my eyes. I didn't think I was doing anything different. After all, I had drawn my whole life, since I was a small child. This was something new and it was happening right before my eyes. I really don't know how to explain it; it just happened. The ink started to live." What really sets this group of drawings apart is their combination of technical virtuosity, unique compositions, exquisite execution, depth of creativity, and profound symbolic content. The "look" of a Canaveral drawing leads one back to the Asian tradition of sumi-e inkwash paintings. There is displayed a broad tonal range from light gray wash tone to complete black in the design. Frank comments: "Honestly, I never heard of this sumi-e Japanese art until you just brought it up. I probably saw art of this type, but it never made an impression. I began to water down the ink and change the tones because I was never happy with drawings that had too much contrast. I wanted to soften that harshness that sometimes comes with black and white. If you look at some of my watercolors, you'll see that I use a softer sepia line to outline the figures. A black line is just too harsh. I always wanted my drawings to be pleasing to the eye." It is easy to see precursors to this technique in almost all of Frazetta's early comic book work, especially the incredible cover to the EC comic *Weird Science-Fantasy* #29 and the "Untamed Love" story from *Personal Love* #32. Frazetta instinctively changed tonal values and utilized chiarascuro in these works; the results are uniformly superb.

However, this technique came into its full power of expression with the Canaveral drawings. By lightening the tones, Frazetta is able to give the finished art a solid, three-dimensional quality and to direct the eye to the areas of important visual interest. The high drama and violence of the subject-matter is mitigated by the extreme beauty of the result. Every drawing glows with a very satisfying beauty. These pieces have a sculptural quality, a felt presence of real life. Each one begins with a small, pencil thumbnail image. Nothing else. No photos, no reference, nothing between the initial idea and its ultimate execution on paper. Frazetta wants the whole process of drawing to be as creative as possible. He wants the freshness of discovery to be present in the finished product. Great art is always alive; it's a living thing. To achieve that quality is rare. Frazetta clarifies this a bit: "I try to work with a nervous hand. I don't want things to get too tight. That kills the drawing. My hand hovers over the surface of the paper until I can feel the hairs just graze the surface. You let your hand feel the picture and it will come to life."

Consider a few examples: The illustration depicting Tarzan rising out of a group of a dozen natives is entitled, "Lord of the Savage Jungle." It is a complete masterpiece— powerful in design, gracefully brushed, and totally hypnotic in its overall effect. The text on which this scene is based is completely irrelevant. This is where illustration meets fine art and becomes indistinguishable from it. Great art is always Fine Art, regardless of what its initial motivation is. Frazetta's brush explodes with emotion, mood, and characterization. The mysterious wonder and power of art is on full display as simple lines affect us, enrich us, and enliven us. Here we are absorbing a quality of Frazetta's powerful personality. This is not illustration; this is high Art at its highest level of excellence. This little jewel presents a magical, multi-layered expressiveness that grips both the imagination and the intellect. On a very literal level

Artwork © by Frank Frazetta

Tooth and Claw, 1964. Brush and ink on paper, 11" x 13". Collection of Dr. David Winlewicz

Lord of the Savage Jungle, 1964. Brush and ink on paper, 9" x 11". Collection of Dr. David Winiewicz

we view a dark, dramatic scene where straining and struggling natives attempt to subdue and capture Tarzan. The art is so compelling in the original that the natives' muscles seem to be alive with movement and heated exertion. A symphony of carefully coordinated lines captures our eye. The natives appear to be in constant motion. After this initial visual shock, the mind becomes completely engaged. One begins to intellectualize about the scene: on a deeper, metaphorical level we are given an insight into the human condition and the nature of the hero, who endures, perseveres, and ultimately prevails no matter how daunting or overwhelming the circumstances. In the composition Tarzan does not look down at his earthly predicament; instead, his gaze is raised to the heavens and deep, inner strength is being summoned. His straining chest and matted hair give testimony to an almost superhuman physical exertion. An intricately woven lattice work of crosshatched lines defines the form of Tarzan and separates him visually from the smoother brushwork on the natives. A rich, resonant light illuminates Tarzan and energizes the composition with a shimmering vitality. Frazetta has never been better. There is such richness of inspiration here. This is a picture of man overcoming his obstacles, transcending imposed limitations, and triumphing. It is a work of human affirmation. I asked Frazetta about the symbolic richness that I see in his work. His response was candid: "I'll be quite honest with you. When you point all these ideas out to me I'm rather amazed. I never really set out to put it in there, but, if you see it, it must be there. You're pretty good at this. It does make some sense and I can certainly see it now. A lot of people see things in my art and I am constantly amazed with what they say." The answer, of course, is that no artist can be completely aware of everything that goes into an original. It is a mysterious flow of soul that invests the ink and lines with an almost enchanted richness. After all, at its base, art is mysterious because creativity is mysterious. One man is disclosing part of his soul to another at a very deep level.

All the other Canaveral drawings are similar little polished jewels of perfection, little miracles. There is never a note of excess diligence or labor in these drawings; everything is accomplished with grace and ease. Another example is the drawing of the mahar raising his arm and entrancing the young virgin. This is one of Frazetta's favorite ideas and he used it later in several oil compositions. With mere pen and ink Frazetta is able to convey the slimy texture of the reptilian mahar. Delicate traceries of water fall off his upraised arm. The design is simple and simply perfect; there is nothing needed, nothing to add. Everything is in perfect balance, a perfect distillation of essentials. There are no tiny hesitations or misunderstandings present in the ink. The heavy background rendering pushes the female figure forward and outlines her form with a three-dimensional expressiveness. There is a provocative thrust in her hip that adds sensuality and erotic energy to the scene. She is so voluptuous, so earthy. The fingers and claws of the mahar are poised in a gesture of pure menace. Frazetta even manages to give a steamy atmosphere to the scene with his interesting choice of scratchy rendering lines in the background. His signature displays the same line-quality and perfectly blends into the background. This is a scene of high drama and evil portent. The theme of monsters and females can be traced all the way to Adam and Eve; it is a staple element in our consciousness. Is this illustration? No, it is much more than that. In the same way that Rembrandt's religious pictures are not just illustrations from the Bible, or the Sistine chapel is not just a cartoon version of biblical stories. A great artist often transcends his subject-matter and transforms it into a window into the soul, an insight into humanity itself. A truly creative artist like Frazetta gathers our attention and raises it to a higher level of penetration and elevates our lives in the process. Frazetta is not illustrating; he is presenting us to ourselves. In these drawings we are far away from simple technique. Technique is only the vehicle for private revelation. A great artist is always revealed in his work.

Pure perfection can also be seen in the amazing drawing of three pteradactyls attacking a sabretooth tiger. Frazetta once told me that, from a purely artistic standpoint, this drawing is probably the best. Once again, the drawing is exquisite; each form is beautifully rendered; each line is perfectly placed. The composition is tight and seamless; the eye is immediately captured and drawn into the piece. The scene is one of swirling violence as these creatures attack and envelop the sabretooth. The pteradactyls are given an almost rocklike texture and appearance that reinforces their intimidating presence. The sabretooth has a curious and magnificent expression that seems to cry out "How dare you attack ME?" His face is an interesting blend of instinctive fear and savage rage. Frazetta's animal work is simply sensational. There is always such a palpable living presence in his animal drawings that screams with brutal life. Frazetta's carefully weighted lines are vivacious and filled with an irrepressible mercurial vitality. The ferocious circular motion of pteradactyls and sabretooth define a world unto itself, aesthetically self-contained with forms entwined in nature's dance of death. The eye is in constant movement among the varying light and dark areas, carefully placed to reinvigorate our attention at each moment of viewing. It is so intensely real in its effect that Frazetta only adds the most minor suggestion of earth and rock at the tiger's feet in order to provide a real foundation for the fight. Without that virtuoso touch, the creatures would float in a void. The overall effect would be greatly diminished. This is the type of deep insight that sets Frazetta apart from other artists. A slightly different variation of this theme, equally brilliant, can be seen on the cover drawing for *At the Earth's Core* where thirteen sabretooths attack a mastadon—a masterful blend of savage forms.

Frazetta is famous for knowing when to leave detail out and when to include it. Much of his success in painting relies on suggestiveness and selection. A piece such as the extraordinary cover to *Tarzan and the Castaways* is rare in that it incorporates a wealth of detail. By far it is the most lavishly textured drawing that Frazetta ever produced. Thick vegetation, an ancient temple, exotic trees, and dappled light provide a rich and soupy atmosphere for Tarzan's escape to the jungle. This is a

The Spell of the Mahar, 1964. Brush and ink on paper. 9" x 12". Collection of Dr. David Winiewicz

Frank Frazetta at work in his studio, 1994

work of pure fun and, yet, it is a completely sophisticated tour de force that features multiple pen and brush techniques. Yes, Frazetta is showing off a bit, but the viewer loves it. Frazetta comments: "Dave, as much as you love my work, believe me when I say that I love it even more. I'm my best fan. I love looking at my stuff; it gives me a thrill, it really does. If I'm happy with a piece, then I'm pretty sure that others will like it too. The major sin in art is to be boring. I don't want to bore the audience and I certainly don't want to bore myself. That's why I try to always come up with something new and fresh. Repetition really serves no purpose." There is a bright sparkle that resonates throughout this image. Tarzan has hoisted the beautiful princess on his shoulders and presents her delicious bottom to us. We can almost feel the smooth porcelain skin as rendered by the soft and incisive lines. The dappled light ribbons on her backside only reinforce the erotic display and present a carefree sensuality. Tarzan's grip makes a soft impression on her skin; we feel the touch with our eye. We revel in the wild vitality of the scene and delight in savoring all the varied textures; each one masterfully presented. Skin, stone, metal, foliage, and hair are all real and fascinating to behold, to contemplate. Even the distinctive signature is applied in a cascading style that mirrors the steps from the background temple. Frazetta presents a world of romance and adventure that we never want to leave. I have always maintained that Frazetta transcends the limiting categories of comic book artist, or fantasy artist, or illustrator. He is, purely and simply, a creative artist of the highest accomplishment.

Each Canaveral plate contains its own rich mix of elements both visual and intellectual. We see the creative exuberance of a powerful mind at play. Every dip of the pen flows with magic. This is creative dreaming at its most profound level. There is nothing like them in all of art history. They set a new standard for creative excellence and what an ink drawing can accomplish. Their impact has been enormous. Hundreds of artists have attempted to emulate Frazetta's techniques. Whenever a serious discussion of Frazetta takes place, invariably these drawings will figure in the debate. They will continue to inspire, delight, and enchant for as long as art exists.

—Article and photographs © 2001 by Dr. Dave Winiewicz
All artwork © by Frank Frazetta

"Doc Dave" Winiewicz (left) has been energetically writing about the art and life of Frank Frazetta for over 25 years. He is a recognized authority in the field, and a strong advocate for placing the body of Frazetta's work into the mainstream of art history.

Caricature of David Winiewicz. Watercolor on board, 9" x 12"
A surprise gift from Frazetta, painted from memory in 1994

Perry Peterson, 1951

The Fashionable World of Perry Peterson

by Daniel Zimmer

It has been said that sometimes the most amazing discoveries are made completely by accident. That certainly was the case when I stumbled across the work of Perry Peterson during one of my daily eBay expeditions a few years ago. At that time, an amazing variety of illustration art was available on the site; the selection perhaps better than one is likely to see today. On that particular day, I discovered five original Peterson gouaches. Though I was only familiar with a few reproductions of his work in Walt and Roger Reed's *Illustrator in America* books, the paintings that I discovered impressed me tremendously, and I had to have them.

Today, as they hang on the walls of my studio, I am continually amazed by Peterson's technical mastery over such a difficult medium—gouache and casein. The bold brushstrokes, vibrant coloration and confident draftsmanship of this relatively lesser known artist also fueled my desire to find out more about him. The seller I purchased the paintings from had found them at an estate sale, carelessly piled up in the corner of the garage; a soiled tarp that smelled of decades-old mildew providing their only protection from the elements. As such, the paintings inevitably bear some stains and slight water damage.

Despite these inglorious circumstances, the paintings radiate a life and energy that thrill me. What information I've turned up about Peterson is only a starting point—one that I would like to expand upon in the near future (in addition to finding more of his original art!) But much like the location of the forgotten paintings themselves, the first step toward discovery is to merely peel back the tarp...

THE EARLY YEARS

Like most young artists, Perry Peterson had his own personal list of art heroes...Some were classical, such as Rembrandt; others, like James Montgomery Flagg, were more contemporary. F.R. Gruger, Charles Dana Gibson, Corot and El Greco were also counted among his favorites. So when he was a high school student in Minnesota in the 1920s, Peterson wasted no time enrolling in the Federal Schools correspondence course (later known as Art Instruction, Inc.) He knew that in order to become a serious artist like his idols, an intense dedication to study and practice was essential. Around this same time Peterson attended night classes at a local art school, learning the requisite skills of oil painting and figure drawing.

His career as a budding commercial artist progressed quickly after graduating high school—freelancing for the Louis F. Dow Company in St. Paul where he painted calendar illustrations, and working in the art department of Jensen Printing Company in Minneapolis. While at Jensen, Perry was instrumental in the creation of the "Indian Girl" motif used by Land O'Lakes butter.

In 1924, the former Minnesota Cooperative Creameries Association made the decision to expand its butter market. In need of a name and trademark for the new brand of butter, a contest was held to choose the new name; the winner to receive $500 in gold (to tie in with the color of the butter.) Two contestants—E.B. Foss and George L. Swift — submitted the name Land O' Lakes; a tribute to the thousands of sparkling lakes within the state of Minnesota. Not only was the

Original illustration for "Tea Dance," *Woman's Home Companion*, July 1947 (detail.) Gouache and casein on board, 18" x 32"

Interior illustration for "Scipio and the Upper Crust," *Country Gentleman*, September 1945

name selected as the winner, but it was so well received that the cooperative itself changed its corporate name to Land O'Lakes Creameries, Inc. An Indian maiden—in Minnesota's proud tradition of Hiawatha and the Minnehaha tribe—was also suggested to appear somewhere on the butter's packaging.

In 1928, Land O'Lakes received a painting of an Indian maiden facing the viewer and holding a butter carton. Lakes, pines, flowers and grazing cows decorated the background. That painting by Perry Peterson inspired a new design for the butter carton, and the design remained until the spring of 1939 when it was simplified and modernized by illustrator Jess Betlach. Fifty years later, with only minor changes, his design continues to decorate Land O'Lakes products—a point of distinction when compared to most classic package art that has been endlessly revised or eliminated in the last half-century.

But just as his career was starting to take flight, the crash of 1929 set the entire nation back a few steps. Peterson spent those years working as a freelancer for an advertising agency in Minneapolis, spending the often long periods of time in between assignments making new samples and perfecting his painting technique. The work he generated during this time would prove invaluable when later trying to scrounge up work when he moved to Chicago, Detroit and eventually New York.

Peterson met and fell in love with a Minneapolis girl named Angie, who worked as a nurse at the city's Swedish Hospital. They married in 1934, moving to Chicago where Peterson landed a job in the catalogue department of Montgomery Ward with a salary of $50 a week. The tedium of drawing merchandise like pots, pans and bicycles only motivated him to do more figurative work. Eight months later, after showing his portfolio to an agency in Chicago, he was able to get in touch with an agency in Detroit. Peterson would now lend his skills to strong national clients like Delco, General Motors, Pontiac and other automakers in the Motor City in 1937.

This experience led in short order to yet another move... This time to New York city and into the Byron-Musser Studio. While there he did the usual drawings and comprehensives, and he did more national advertising work for General Motors, Ipana, Sal Hepatica and Schenley. During his time at Byron-Musser, Perry continued to work on his samples, expanding his technique and working with ink washes and Martin's dyes for a second color. After the birth of his first child Penny in 1939, Peterson knew that he had to work harder than ever and focus on his work full-time.

Interior illustration for "Dark Passage," *The Saturday Evening Post*, August 31, 1946

His goal was to break into the big magazines with the editorial work he longed to do. After many discouraging trips to the editorial offices around town, he finally got his big break with *Liberty* magazine in 1942. The job there involved illustrating a few short stories at first, and then evolved into working an eight-part mystery serial. More slicks enlisted Peterson—*Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook* and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

One day, as he was calling on *Cosmopolitan* magazine, he met Celia Mendelsohn, an event that would change his life. Celia and her brother Sidney operated American Artists Agency, a representative firm for illustrators. (Other clients of the Mendelsohn's included such notables as Walter Baumhofer, Andew Loomis and Bradshaw Crandell.) Out of this chance meeting grew an association that lasted until the end of Peterson's life. Celia and Sidney took him under their wing, and soon recognized the elements of his work that were his signature. His flair for design and for composition made him made him very unique, and soon Peterson was accepting assignments from all of the top magazines. A constant source of amazement to the art editors was his uncanny instinct for fashion. He was a perfectionist, and for assignments where special attention to fashion was required, he would pay as high as two-and-a-half times the going rate for a top model with a good wardrobe. He studied all the leading fashion magazines, and devoted more time to "window shopping" than most female contemporaries.

Despite this, Perry resisted any sort of stereotyping or pigeonholing. He did not want to be seen as strictly a fashion or glamour illustrator. "The latest fashion in the wrong pose is a total loss. The important thing in utilizing the fashion element in illustration is to employ it to enhance the whole composition." He insisted on doing a wide variety of pieces which stressed the dramatic as much as the romantic or decorative. His constant energy and inventiveness made his work exciting and dynamic, and he rapidly rose to the top of the field. At the peak of his success, Perry was promoted by his agents as "one of the ten best illustrators in the nation."

Perry's success afforded him many of the luxuries of the successful illustrators of the time, and he built a large home in the Danville, Connecticut wilderness, complete with a two-story high studio and large, northern-facing windows. His estate was considerable, with a lake and acres of woods that he and his children would hike in. A son, Peter, was born 10 years after his daughter Penny in 1949.

Interior illustration for *Country Gentleman*, August 1945

Perry Peterson at work in his studio, 1951

Peterson portrays himself at work in this self-portrait

PETERSON'S WORKING METHODS

"I think that one of the most important elements in the production of an illustration is the artist's mental approach to his work."

Perry would treat each new assignment as if it were an exciting sample of his work. Throughout the process, he would work to keep his enthusiasm and excitement up. "As far as I'm concerned, to make an illustration come off right, you've got to keep excited and enthused about it all. There's nothing more interesting or absorbing than composing and executing a job of art work—if you're sold on it."

"I don't make thumbnails, though I submit one to four sketches on an assignment." Peterson insisted that he would get no place by sitting down witha pencil in hand and doodling to try to think out the solution to a problem. It was more important for him to see the picture in his mind as a complete entity. He would get the germ of an idea and just think it out. Often the art directors would select the subject of his illustrations, but about half of the time Perry would make the selection himself.

Perry would frequently rely on his extensive scrap files (compiled over the course of 25 years) to help him visualize his illustrations. He would start by determining the location and the characters in the story, and then pull out appropriate visuals from his files. "I find that in going over this scrap, I generally slip into the mood of the story and the situation I've selected...It's funny the way just the sight of those few scraps of copy on the subject will bring you to the point where you start feeliing the stone pavement and the cold buildings and the air of bustle as people hurry by on their way home to escape the icy bite of a cutting wind sweeping in from the East River; the

ABOVE: Two rough pencil sketches for "The Nuisance" by Paul Ernst. *The American Magazine*, June, 1950

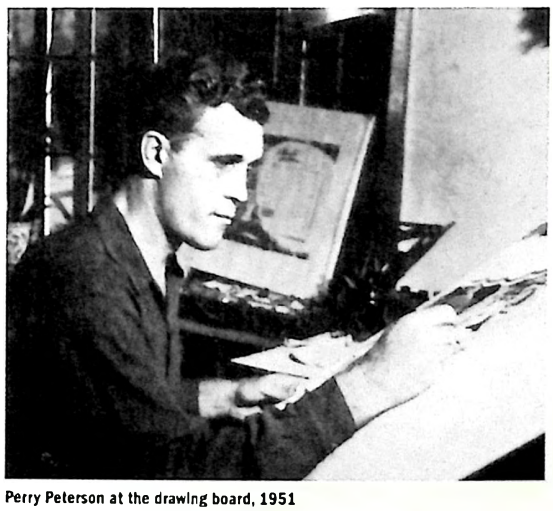
Completed illustration in gouache and casein. The dog and the background of the illustration were done from reference scrap. The painting was varnished upon completion

Reference photograph

The comprehensive color sketch, made to final size. The art director's notations regarding color are shown written in red

Original illustration for "Men Are a Problem," unknown publication. Watercolor and gouache on board, 20" x 11.25"

This Week magazine illustration with two reference photographs (right), 1951



Perry Peterson at the drawing board, 1951

wind will be whipping a few scraps of paper around the street and making ripples on a puddle left here and there from the cold rain that only stopped awhile ago; a pair of headlights will glare throught the street... It's only scrap that you've cut and filed yourself, but it really starts to warm you up to your subject.

"I pick out interesting pieces of scrap: views of the Third Avenue "El" or a skyline for background, traffic views, house fronts, street signs and the like... often, even after the art editor has selected a situation for the illustration, I'll present a sketch of an incident that I like along with a sketch of the one he's picked. The editors are looking for a good job, and they often switch to my choice."

Once Peterson had completely visualized the image in his head, and had gathered all of his appropriate reference materials, he would begin working on sketches and thinking of color schemes.

Once the sketches were approved, his next step would be to select and hire models. "Models can make or break a job at times, so I find I have the best success with professional models. They may cost a little more, but a vital looking girl who loves to act and buys clothes for their lines rather than their color, who has good bone structure and who can switch her hair around a dozen different ways in the space of a few minutes and who, no matter what the pose, can still look graceful, is just plain worth every last cent of her fee."

His photos would be taken either at his home in Connecticut, or in a photo studio in New York. "I usually have the poses pretty well thought out, but lots of times a pose may come up so naturally that it looks better than the one I had in mind. If necessary, I'll revise my composition to accomodate it."

Original illustration for an unknown publication, mid-1950s. Gouache and casein on board, 24" x 21"

Interior illustration for "Waltz with Ruby," *Woman's Home Companion*, February 1949

The next step would be the rough working drawings, which would be made on progressive layers of tissue. The drawings were relatively tight and refined, and each layer would build on the next. One overlay would be a tone drawing, the others would be refinements to the original rough sketch. Finally, the line drawing would be traced down onto a sheet of Whatman board with a hard H pencil and made ready for painting.

MEDIUMS

Peterson's techniques and mediums changed progressively over the years. From 1930 to 1935, he worked in watercolors and oil. From 1935 to 1940, most of his work was made with Wolf crayon pencil and stump, used on a special tracing paper over a pencil working drawing. This was then mounted on board with dry mounting tissue. Color could be added after mounting.

For three or four years after that, Perry experimented with ink washes, employing a secondary color for magazine illustration work.

From the mid forties into the fifties, he worked primarily in Winsor and Newton's designer colors (gouache) and casein tempera. "These help me to really get my teeth into an illustration and to build up a solid painted quality in a picture."

"When you boil all of this down, though, you'll come right back to the fact that the original rough sketch is the hardest part of the job, because it's the backbone of it; without that,

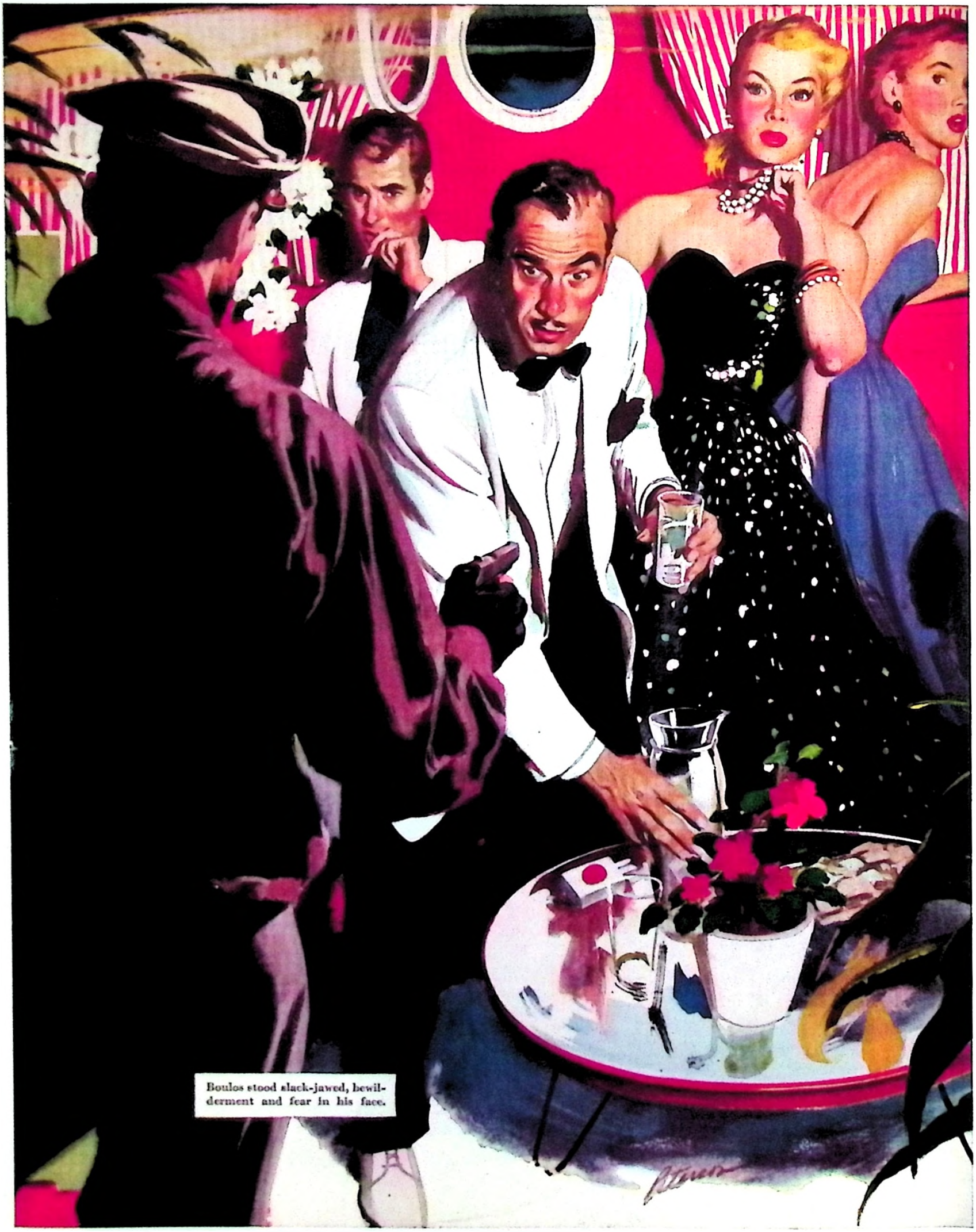
Preliminary sketch for *Cosmopolitan* illustration

Original illustration for "The Grassy Place," *The American Magazine*, July 1952. Gouache on board, 14" x 16"

Original illustration for an unknown publication, mid-1950s. Gouache on board, 15" x 9"

Original illustration for an unknown publication, mid-1950s. Gouache on board, 17" x 15"

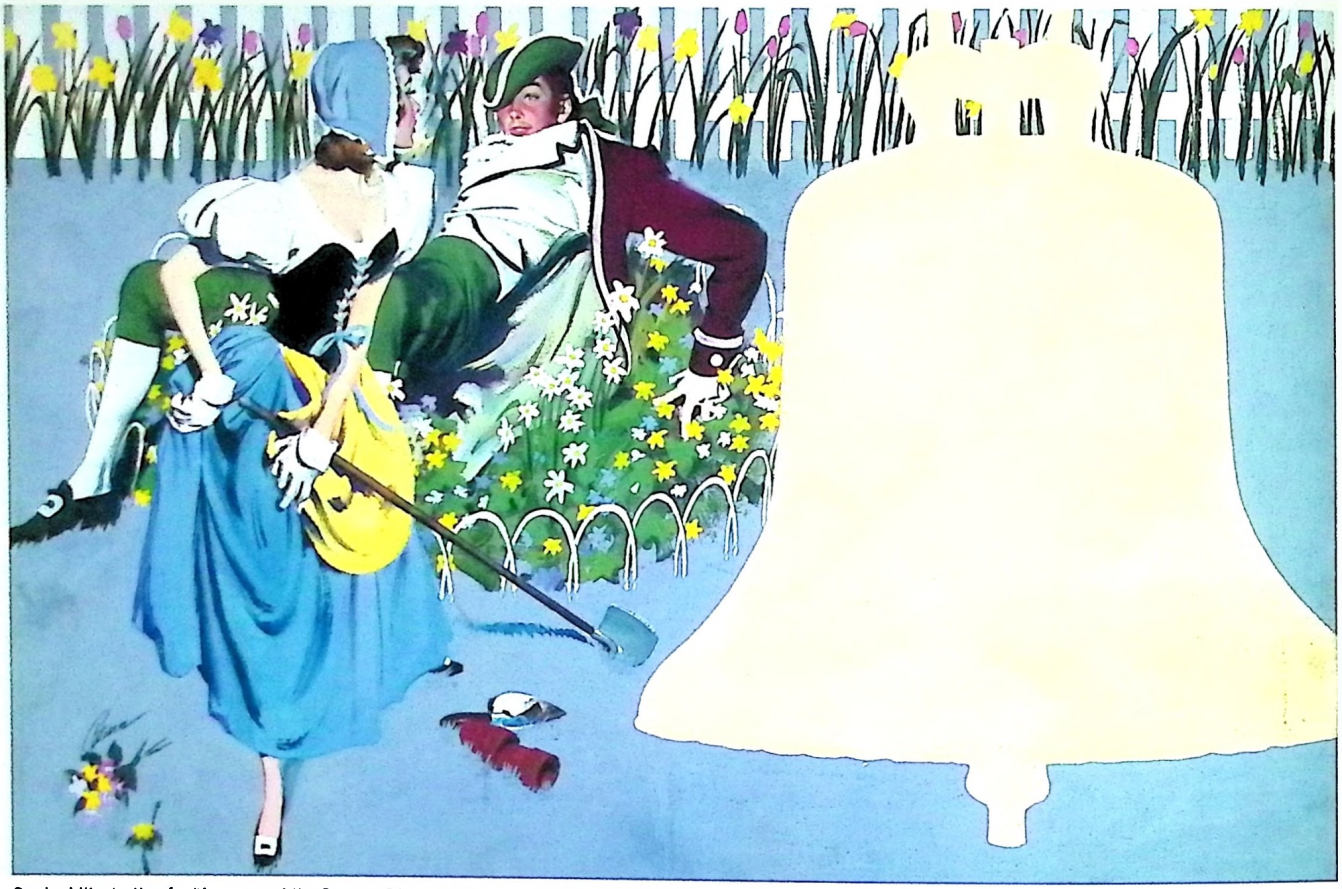
Original illustration for "Royal Bed for a Corpse," *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 1954. Gouache on board, 24" x 16"



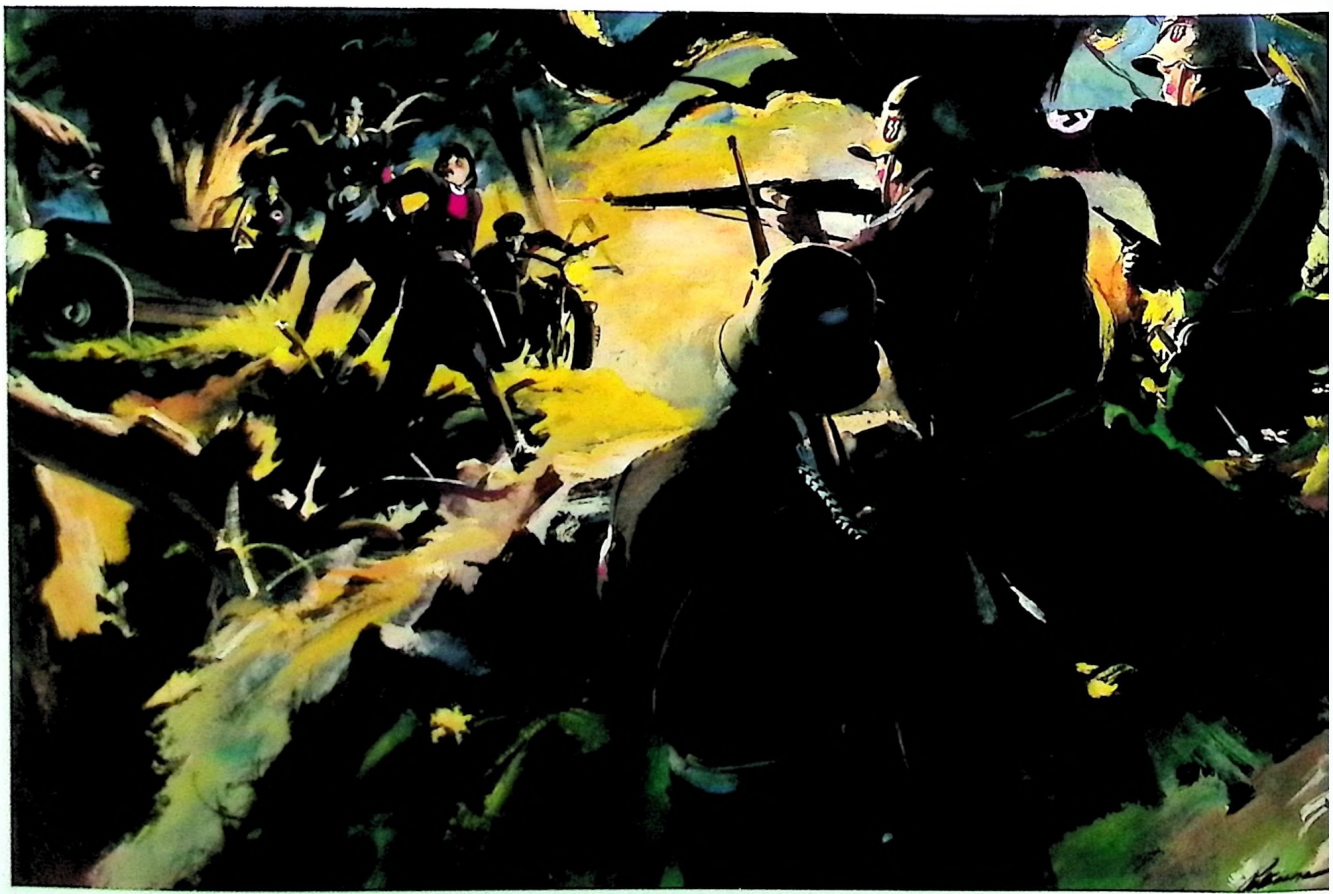
Interior Illustration for "The Adventure of the Riviera Pirate," *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 3, 1953

Original illustration for "Second Spring," *The American Magazine*, 1954. Gouache on board, 20" x 29"

Interior illustration for "The Babe on the Park Bench," *The Saturday Evening Post*, February 23, 1952

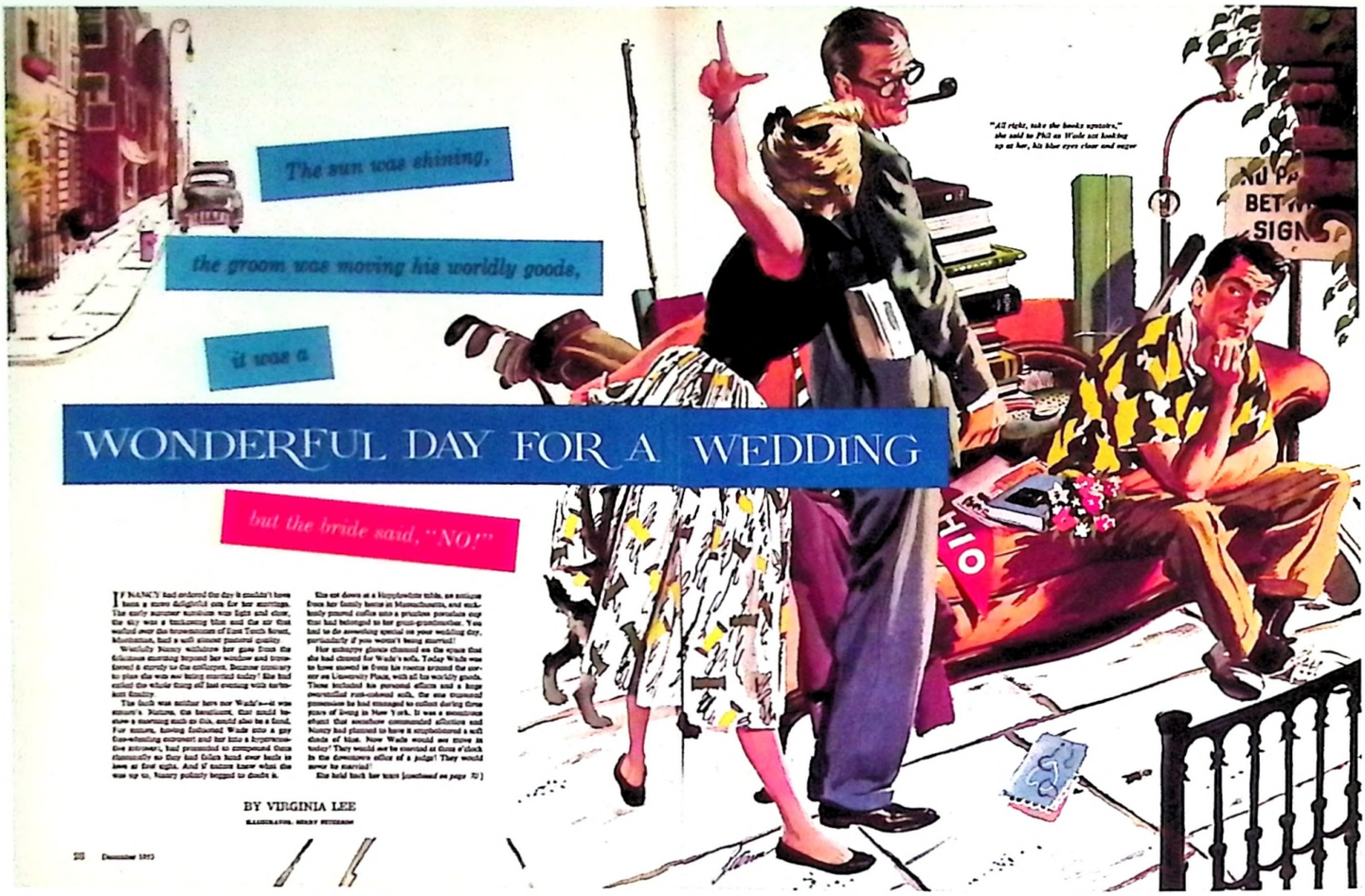


Original illustration for "Joanne and the Stranger," *Woman's Home Companion*, July 1950. Gouache on board, 20" x 28"



Original illustration for an unknown publication. Gouache on board. 20" x 28". Collection of Joel Naprstek

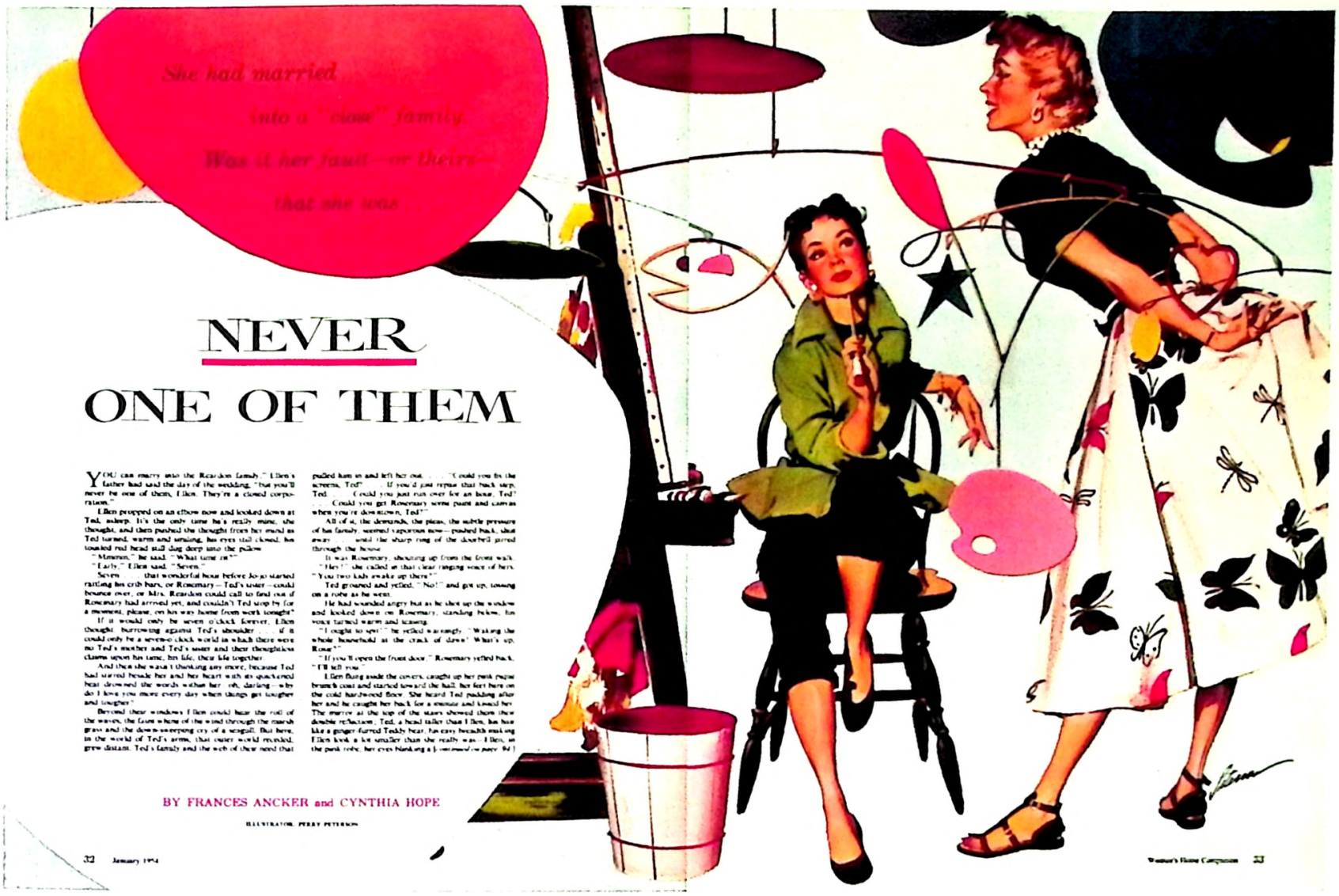
Original illustration for "The Ambassador's Daughter," *The American Magazine*, December 1950. Gouache on board, 29" x 21"


The sun was shining,
the groom was moving his worldly goods,
it was a
WONDERFUL DAY FOR A WEDDING
but the bride said, "NO!"
BY VIRGINIA LEE
"All right, take the books upstairs," she said as Phil as Wade sat looking up at her, his blue eyes clear and eager
OHIO

Interior illustration for "Wonderful Day for a Wedding," *Woman's Home Companion*, December 1953

THE MISSING WITNESS
They'd planned just a simple job, robbing an old man in a lonely house. But now it was murder, and they were trapped and hysterical
BY JOHN AND WARD HAWKINS
Terrified, she listened to the debate that meant her life—or death.

Interior illustration for "The Missing Witness," *Cosmpolitan*, June 1954



NEVER ONE OF THEM

BY FRANCES ANCKER and CYNTHIA HOPE

ILLUSTRATOR: PERRY PETERSON

YOU can marry into the Reardon family," Ellen's father had said the day of the wedding, "but you'll never be one of them, Ellen. They're a closed corporation."

Ellen propped on an elbow now and looked down at Ted, asleep. It's the only time he's really mine, she thought, and then pushed the thought from her mind as Ted turned, warm and smiling, his eyes still closed, his tousled red head still dug deep into the pillow.

"Mmmm," he said. "What time is it?"

"Early," Ellen said. "Seven."

Seven . . . that wonderful hour before Jo-jo started rattling his crib bars, or Rosemary—Ted's sister—could bounce over, or Mrs. Reardon could call to find out if Rosemary had arrived yet, and couldn't Ted stop by for a moment, please, on his way home from work tonight?

If it would only be seven o'clock forever, Ellen thought, burrowing against Ted's shoulder . . . if it could only be a seven-o'clock world in which there were no Ted's mother and Ted's sister and their thoughtless claims upon his time, his life, their life together.

And then she wasn't thinking any more, because Ted had turned beside her and her heart with its quickened beat drowned the words within her: Oh, darling—why do I love you more every day when things get tougher and tougher?

Beyond their windows Ellen could hear the roll of the waves, the faint whine of the wind through the marsh grass and the down-sweeping cry of a seagull. But here, in the world of Ted's arms, that outer world receded, grew distant. Ted's family and the web of their need that pulled him in and left her out. . . . "Could you fix the screens, Ted?" . . . If you'd just repair that back step, Ted. . . . Could you just run over for an hour, Ted? . . . Could you get Rosemary some paint and canvas when you're downtown, Ted?"

All of it, the demands, the pleas, the subtle pressure of his family, seemed vaporous now—pushed back, shut away . . . until the sharp ring of the doorbell jarred through the house.

It was Rosemary, shouting up from the front walk. "Hey!" she called at that clear ringing voice of hers. "You two kids awake up there?"

Ted groaned and yelled, "No!" and got up, tossing on a robe as he went.

He had sounded angry but as he shot up the window and looked down on Rosemary, standing below, his voice turned warm and teasing.

"I ought to spit," he yelled warningly. "Waking the whole household at the crack of dawn! What's up, Rose?"

"If you'll open the front door," Rosemary yelled back, "I'll tell you."

Ellen flung aside the covers, caught up her pink rayon brunch coat and started toward the hall; her feet hurt on the cold hardwood floor. She heard Ted paddling after her and he caught her back for a minute and kissed her. The mirror at the top of the stairs showed them their double reflection. Ted, a head taller than Ellen, his hair like a ginger-furred Teddy bear, his easy broadth making Ellen look a lot smaller than she really was—Ellen, in the pink robe, her eyes blanking a [continued on page 84]

Interior illustration for "Never One of Them," *Woman's Home Companion*, January 1954

Most Beautiful Girl in the World

BY LEE ROGOW

ILLUSTRATOR: PERRY PETERSON

In one short year he made her into the famous model Lucy Hill but the only man in her life was a crazy mixed-up millionaire

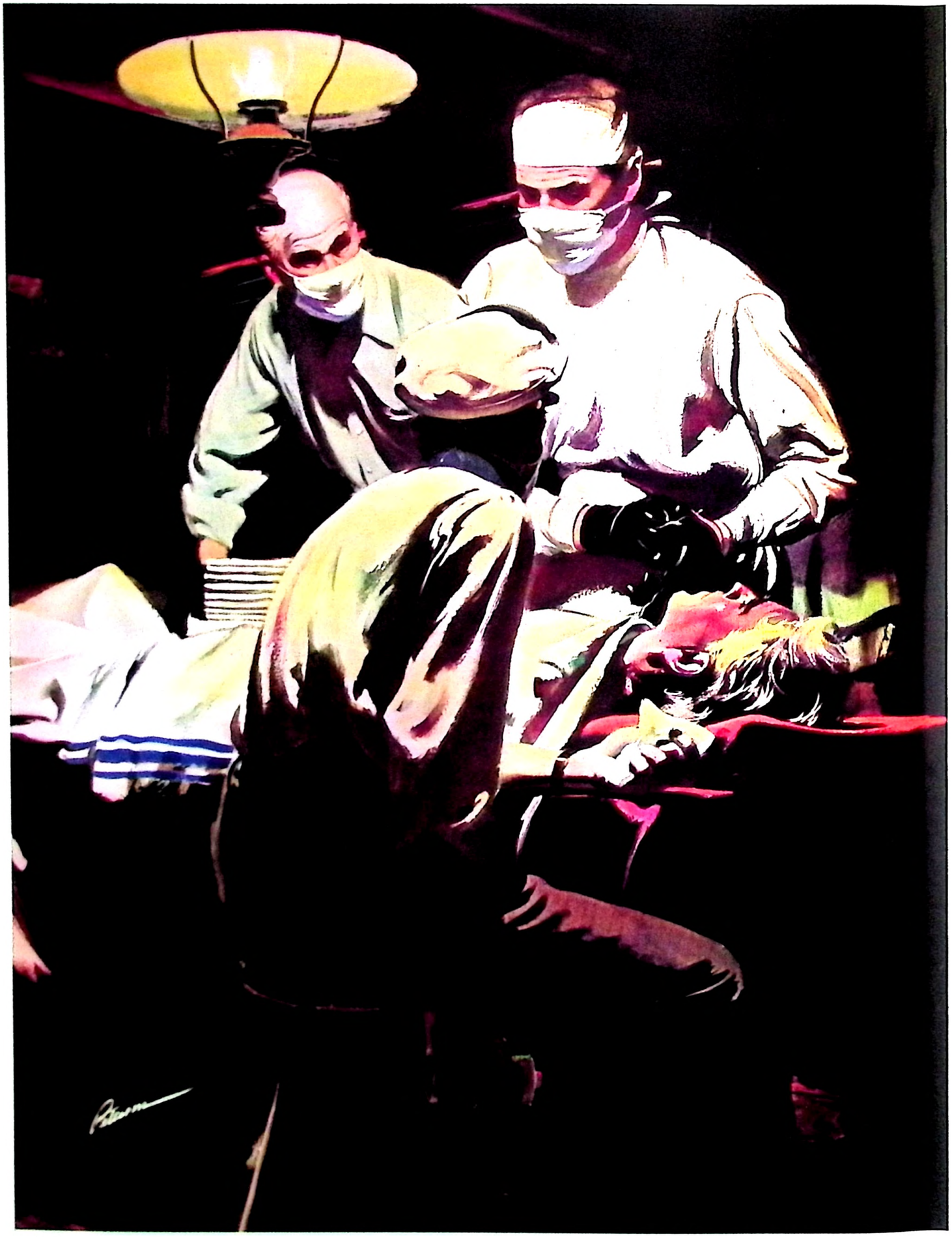
TO look upon Lucy Hill, of Fairfield, Iowa, was to feel a pang in the heart that such perfection could exist. The structuring of her face was classic, the brow was smooth and serene, the nose straight, with curving aristocratic nostrils, the eyes impossibly large and liquid and black and tilted slightly upward at the corners. The neck of Lucy Hill was a column of alabaster and her ears—but why go on?

The parents of Lucy Hill were a pleasant farm couple who were so astonished by their achievement in producing this daughter as if a star had fallen in their midst.

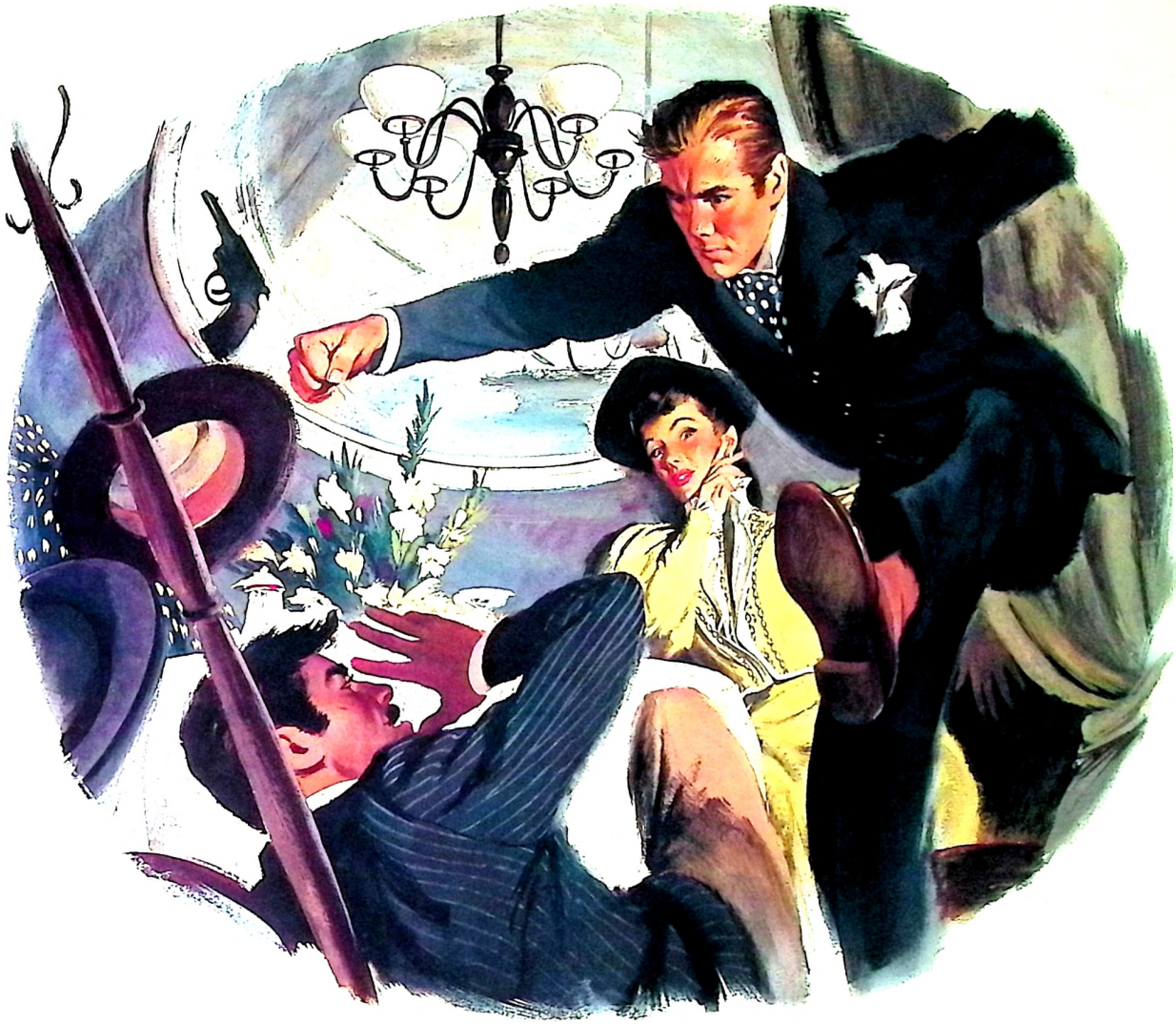
When she was 21, they accepted the inevitable and permitted her to pack her bag and depart for the great metropolitan arena for which fate had obviously intended her. Before the farewells, Mr. Hill gave Lucy a brief talk in which he described the ways of the big city in the same terms which daddy warns simplex in breaking the news about rubes to the baby worms. Mrs. Hill, a practical soul, presented Lucy with a six-inch hatpin. "Keep it around," she said, "even when you don't wear a hat."

When Lucy reported for duty in New York, she rented a cubicle at the Molly Pitcher Hotel for Women. Then she walked to the building which housed the famous Timothy Young model agency. The waiting-room of the agency was crowded with an assortment of what appeared to be countesses, rich men's wives and international spies. Though she felt somewhat self-conscious in her sensible shoes and simple dress, Lucy observed that the assembled group fell silent as she passed among them to the receptionist's desk. "I should like to see Mr. Timothy Young," said Lucy to the motherly-looking receptionist. [continued on page 108]

Interior illustration for "Most Beautiful Girl in the World," *Woman's Home Companion*, April 1955



Interior illustration for "Surgery at Sea," *The Saturday Evening Post*, February 23, 1957



Original illustration for "Politico," *The Saturday Evening Post*. Gouache on board, 16" x 20"

you could spend six months on an illustration and still not have anything."

Peterson would usually spend 8 days on an average assignment. A simple project might only take 2 or 3 days. "Facility will come with practice, and after all, anything worth doing at all is worth your very best efforts. The person who tries to rush his work, to see it finished in a hurry, is quite apt to find that the finished result will have the hurried appearance of work into which the producer has put more speed than brains."

"I believe that what an illustration has to say is the most important thing to think of. After that comes an exciting composition of line and mass of color to put it over. It's the illustrator's job to get the reader interested in a story, whether through a mysterious looking, tantalizing mass of shadows with a ray of light piercing the gloom or by means of a bewitching girl with character in her face giving you a "come hither" look... It's more fun that way, and in the final analysis, I believe you should enjoy doing a picture or not do it at all."

A very heavy smoker all of his life, Perry Peterson died tragically after falling asleep with a lit cigarette and setting himself on fire in 1958. He suffered third-degree burns over most of his body, and passed away after two weeks in the hospital.

Though his work has faded into obscurity today, I hope that this brief article will inspire others to re-evaluate the work and career of Perry Peterson. I hope to produce a book at some time in the future, so anyone with additional information is encouraged to please get in touch!

—© 2002, 2009 by Daniel Zimmer

Special thanks to Perry Kneisel and his mother Mary, who was a personal friend of the Peterson family and provided invaluable additional background information for this article.

For more information about Perry Peterson, please see:

Halsey, Jr., Ashley, *Illustrating for the Saturday Evening Post*, New York: Knickerbocker Press, Inc., 1951. (Pg. 84-85.)

Peterson, Perry, *The Technique of Perry Peterson*, Minneapolis, MN: Art Instruction, Inc., 1952.

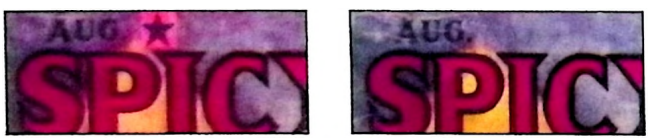
Reed, Walt. *The Illustrator in America 1860-2000*, New York: The Society of Illustrators, Inc., 2001. (Pg. 285.)

FROM SPICY TO BLAND:

Aspects of Culture-Trojan Self-Censorship

by Alfred Jan

Many comic book fans and collectors know about the Comics Magazine Association of America's Comic Code of 1954, when the entire industry decided to regulate product content. No such code existed for pulp magazines of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. However, one publishing empire named Culture Publications or Trojan Publications at various times (hereafter referred to as "Culture-Trojan"), and owned by Harry Donenfeld and Frank Armer, censored its own magazines. (For the most detailed history of Culture-Trojan available to date, see "DC's Tangled Roots!: The Unknown History of the Donenfeld Publishing Empire," by Will Murray in *Comic Book Marketplace* No. 53, November 1997.) In this article, however, I will show specific strategies adopted by Culture-Trojan to cope with increasing pressure by morals squads and city governments to clean up sexual titillation in the Spicy and related pulps and comics.



Left: Boxed star code. Right: No star. *Spicy-Adventure Stories*, August 1937

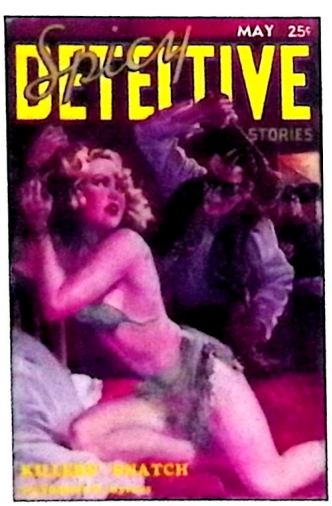
During the 1936 and 1937 runs of *Spicy-Adventure Stories* and *Spicy Detective Stories*, Culture-Trojan devised a code on front covers to signify expurgated versus unexpurgated copies of a particular issue: a boxed star at the top near the month indicated the cleaned-up version, while a non-boxed star or no star meant the spicy version. Notice the two August 1937 *Spicy-Adventure Stories* covers are identical except for the boxed star to the right of "Aug." Pictorial and textual differences occur inside, where more exposed women inhabit the spicy version and more covered up women are found in the other version. In the example from "For Valor" by Robert Leslie Bellem, my favorite interior artist, "Jay M." drew one woman in bra and panties with nipples showing, and the other in a one piece teddy. The text on the same page also differ, with steamier words accompanying the sexier picture. Thus "For Valor" is actually two different stories in terms of language used to describe extent of female sexiness and degree of excitement engendered. Oddly, *Spicy Mystery Stories* did not appear this way, but true completests will need to collect both versions of *Spicy Detective Stories* and *Spicy-Adventure Stories*. I am not familiar enough with the fourth title in the series, *Spicy Western Stories*, to include it in this study; it was published later than the others, almost as an afterthought.

A second example of Spicy self-censorship involved borrowing an earlier cover painting and putting more clothes on the woman. She has on pink bra and panties on the cover of June 1935 *Spicy Mystery Stories*, and returns with a red dress on the cover of June 1939. The blonde whipping victim in bra and panties (*Spicy Detective Stories*) is reprised April 1939 as brunette in a torn green dress. In addition, the male villain no longer wears a mask, and sports a different colored tie. But try as they might, I do not believe Donenfeld and company succeeded in toning down one of the most violent covers in the title.

The Spicys became the tamer Speeds beginning January 1943 and ending for good in the late 1940s, while the already tamer *Private Detective Stories* began in June 1937 and ran through June 1949. By the mid-1940s, most sexually daring pulps had retrenched, including Culture-Trojan's. Even exposed leg and thigh were deemed too risque and had to be covered up, as in May 1941 *Private Detective Stories* and June 1945 *Speed Detective*, where the couple also ended up in a different location.

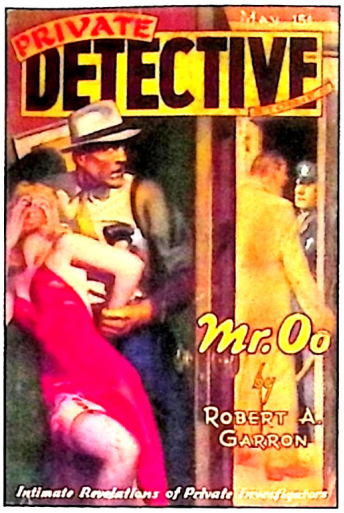
Most pulp magazines were gone by the mid-1950s, eclipsed by television, comic books and paperback books. Culture-Trojan had moved into comics by this time, and saw fit to re-use several *Spicy Mystery Stories* covers for at least two pre-Code titles, *Crime Mysteries* and *Beware*. The woman on the cover of *Spicy Mystery* February 1941 sported a two-piece outfit (not underwear) only to return on *Beware* No. 16 in a red dress, essentially covering her midriff and upper thighs. The murderess on *Spicy Mystery Stories* November 1937 has a teddy showing lots of leg, but wears a full

Left: Uncensored. Right: Boxed star. *Spicy-Adventure Stories*, August 1937

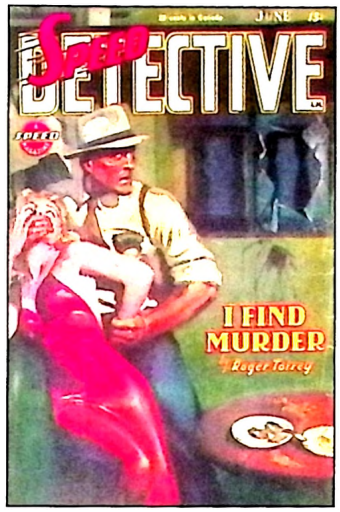


***Spicy Detective Stories*, May 1935**
Artist: H.L. Parkhurst

***Spicy Detective Stories*, April 1939**
Artist: H.L. Parkhurst

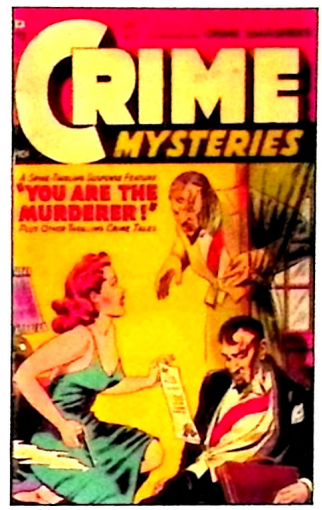


Private Detective Stories, May 1941
Artist: H.J. Ward



Speed Detective Stories, June 1945
Artist: H.J. Ward

Spicy Mystery, November 1937
Artist: H.J. Ward



Crime Mysteries #9, September 1935

length dress on *Crime Mysteries* No. 9. Ironically, Culture-Trojan censored its own cover imagery BEFORE the Code demanded it.

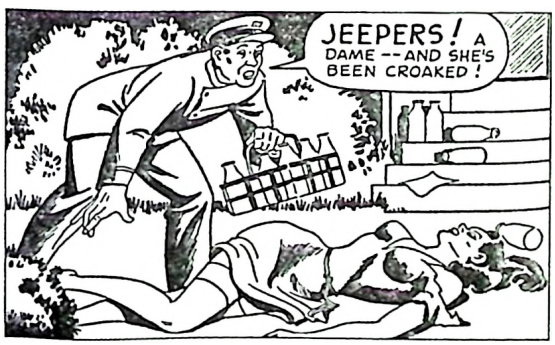
One last example must be discussed, something I learned from Will Murray's article. The June 1949 issue of *Private Detective*, specifically a panel from a Sally the Sleuth episode called "Death Bait," has the honor of being the only pulp with content reproduced in Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* (SOTI). The good Doctor found the panel in which a milkman discovers a raped and murdered woman too injurious for young readers. Not surprisingly, the pulp version showed the female corpse with well defined breasts and dress hiked up high, while the SOTI reproduction revealed less, along with flatter breasts. Wertham took this image from *Crime Smashers* No. 1, another Culture-Trojan pre-Code title, which, in turn, re-ran it from *Private Detective*. Here we have double irony, because Wertham condemned an already cleaned-up picture! Just imagine the coronary he would have suffered if he had seen the more shocking original!

As additional background, I must note that Sally the Sleuth's early exploits in *Spicy Detective Stories* of the 1930s usually ended with her wearing only bra and panties after villains had ripped off her dress. However, in "Death Bait," she kept her dress on throughout, but the various female attack victims were much more exposed in the pulp than in the comic book. Thus the entire comic strip had already been de-sexualized prior to Dr. Wertham's zeroing in on one instance.

This brief survey raises many questions. Why was *Spicy Mystery Stories* spared the boxed star treatment when it was considered the most notorious of the group? Why were dual issues only restricted to 1936 and 1937? How was the boxed star actually used? Some believe it identified issues distributed to Bible Belt states and other more conservative parts of the country. This seems plausible, since in many people's minds, morality with a capital M only means sexual morality, not for instance, the morality of helping those who cannot help themselves. Another theory says those issues were subscriptions sent through the mail and had to pass postal censors. This theory sounds reasonable if the magazines had subscription coupons, but they did not. Does that mean no subscriptions were offered? I am not sure. Perhaps they designated copies sold over the counter and the others were under the counter. Because company records are not available, we will never know the real reason for the boxed star code.

Questions regarding choice of covers for reprinting are intriguing as well. *Spicy-Adventure Stories* also re-used a mid-1930s cover for a late 1930s issue, but the degree of body exposure was almost identical. Why? Why did one *Speed Adventure Stories* re-use an earlier *Spicy-Adventure Stories* cover image without any changes at all, while the other Spicys did not do the same? Why were only a few *Spicy Mystery Stories* covers used for pre-Code crime and horror covers, and why those particular ones? One issue of *Crime Mysteries*, cleaned up of course, borrowed from TWO different *Spicy Mystery Stories* covers, but this time, I will invite readers to identify the three issues involved. Why was this done, and why only once? Ultimately, such questions may never be answered, since they may have been spur of the moment editorial decisions which were not recorded or justified in writing. Even if these records could be found, the person responsible is no longer around to help us.

Alls the pity that the Spicy publisher caved in to societal pressures, but for better or worse these cultural artifacts reflect the attitudes of their time. Culture-Trojan started out pushing the boundaries of taste with their girly magazines, sexually charged pulps, softcover digests, and even hardbound books, but we will never know what new directions they may have taken readers and collectors.



Left: *Private Detective Stories*, June, 1949. Uncensored panel

Right: *Crime Smashers*,#1. Censored panel as reproduced in *Seduction of the Innocent* by Frederic Wertham, M.D.

Alfred Jan is co-editor, with Bill Blackbeard, of *Footprints on a Brain: The Inspector Allhoff Stories by D. L. Champion*, Adventure House, 2001, a collection of short stories originally published in the detective pulp called *Dime Detective Magazine*.

Original cover illustration by Graves Gladney for *The Shadow*, "Masters of Death," May 14, 1940. Oil on canvas, 30" x 20"

Scenes from the Life of a Collector

by Walker A. Martin

Eleanor and Walker Martin at Pulpcon #1, with painting by Graves Gladney

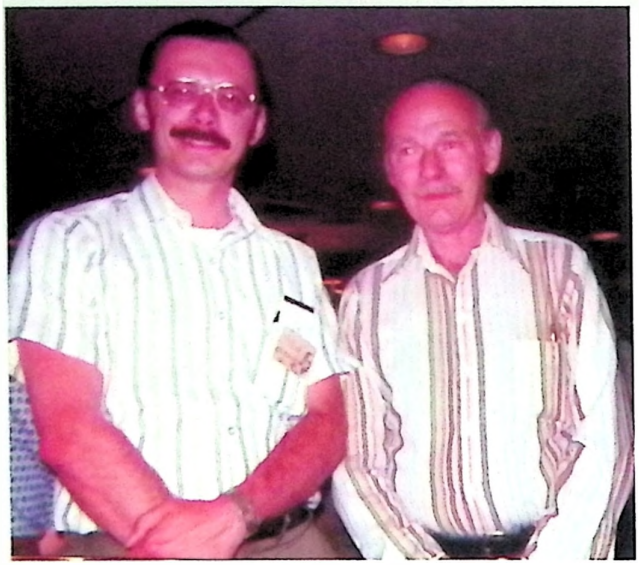
The auction room in the hotel is crowded with young science fiction fans as item after item of material related to Science Fiction is auctioned off to the highest bidder. The Collector, obviously older than most of the SF fans, watches the proceedings with a bored expression. With no warning, two pulp paintings are offered for bids. The Collector is stunned, the bored expression wiped off. The paintings appear to be from detective pulps, and are the most beautiful and interesting things the Collector will ever see at a New York City Lunacon. No one else in the crowded room appears to show the slightest interest in the paintings. No one accepts the minimum bid of $50.00—not even the Collector, who has lost the power of speech and movement.

After the auction is over the Collector obtains one of the paintings for $50.00. He can't believe his good fortune. The painting is large, the canvas pinned to a heavy display board. It appears to be from the 1930s. On the train back to Trenton, New Jersey, he cannot stop looking at and talking about the painting. He and his friend are so absorbed that they miss their Trenton stop and continue on to Philadelphia. The conductor makes them pay additional money to cover the trip to Philly. Then they have to get off, buy tickets and go back to Trenton. The Collector's wife is not amused by his lateness and doesn't want the painting on the wall. Over the years, this will only be the first of over one hundred such discussions involving pulp paintings, paperback paintings, digest magazine paintings, and all sorts of interior magazine artwork.

Eventually, the wife even comes to appreciate much of the art and allows it to be hung in living rooms, family rooms, bedrooms, bathrooms and hallways. However, she draws the line and refuses to display paintings depicting insane, deformed cretins whipping young nude women.

The Collector often wonders why so many women object to these paintings...

Edward Kessell, Rusty Hevelin, and Eleanor Walker at Pulpcon #1, June 1972



Walker and Norman Saunders, Pulpcon #6, July 1977

Walter Baumhofer and wife, Cherry Hill Pulp Convention, 1984

Walter with Raphael DeSoto, mid-1980s

PULPCON ONE, JUNE 1972—ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

The VW Beetle hurtles along the highway as the Collector and his wife eagerly speed toward Pulpcon #1. Well, maybe the Wife is not too eager, but the Collector keeps her amused with his theory of how each pulp magazine has a very distinctive scent. After two days of hard driving, they stumble out of the VW and meet a balding man at the hotel registration desk. He is very excited and close to tears. Ed Kessel planned and organized Pulpcon #1, and he was certain no one was going to come.

By Sunday morning the Collector is broke, having spent every last dime on hundreds of books and magazines. In fact, most of this material will not fit in the VW and will have to be mailed back to Trenton. The Collector knows that nine paintings by Walter Baumhofer will be auctioned, so he starts to frantically beg and borrow money from his wife. He ends up buying two paintings from *Dime Mystery* and *Dime Detective.* Total price: $230.00. The other seven paintings were sold at prices not much over the $75.00 minimum. The rest of his life, the Collector will curse his stupidity for not somehow obtaining the other seven paintings. It is a mistake he will not often repeat.

PULPCON SIX, JULY 1977—AKRON, OHIO

The Wife is listening for the hundredth time about how great it would be if she would consent to using a perfume made out of pulp paper shreds. In disbelief she listens to her husband's latest idea...a tattoo of one of his favorite pulp magazine covers on his chest. He goes on to explain the back cover, showing some type of crazy advertisements, would be on his back, with the spine showing the magazine title, date and volume number on his side. Since these ideas do not receive a favorable response, the Collector wanders outside to the hotel parking lot. He has been hoping to buy a pulp painting at this convention, but so far with no luck. He has asked everyone the same stupid question..."Do you know of anyone with pulp paintings?" He has finally resigned himself to the fact that there are no paintings available when a car drives into the lot. Recognizing the newcomer, he asks the stupid question and is amazed when he is told that here is a pulp painting in the car trunk. Not even letting the guy go into the hotel and register, the Collector buys the painting by Walter Baumhofer right out of the trunk for $400.00. Practically crying with joy, he brings it into the huckster room and shows it to pulp artist guest of honor, Norman Saunders. Saunders is astounded about the story of buying a Baumhofer *Dime Western* painting out of a car trunk in the hotel parking lot. Staring at it he finally mutters, "Christ, Baumhofer was great." Considering how great Saunders was in the field of magazine illustration, this is fine praise.

CHERRY HILL PULP CONVENTION, AUGUST 1984

The Collector is just back from the convention and he is on vacation. Somehow he has managed to buy and trade for ten pulp paintings. Artists such as Raphael DeSoto, Norman Saunders, Walter Baumhofer, Lyman Anderson and George

Original *Black Mask* pulp cover by Raphael DeSoto

Walker with art dealer Steve Kennedy, October 1997. Above Walker's head is the first original pulp cover painting he ever bought

Rozen. Paintings from magazines like *Dime Detective, Argosy, Fifteen Western Tales, Adventure* and *Detective Short Stories.* From the couch, as he reads an issue of *Adventure*, he can see the ten bright new paintings lined up against the bookshelves. Unfortunately, he has run out of wall space and cannot hang them. Reading is the great solitary pleasure, but so is looking at original art, one of a kind and so unique. As usual, after a couple of hours of reading, the pulp smell—acting as a drug—weakens his hands and he falls asleep in a state of bliss, the pulp magazine lying open on his face.

PAPERBACK CONVENTION—SADDLE BROOK, NJ, 1983

For two days the Collector has been pestering the pulp artist to sell one of his *Black Mask* paintings that is on display at the convention. The Collector has tried everything and nothing has worked. He has offered money, another painting in trade, food, and alcohol. Finally the Collector drives home, digs up an old letter from the artist that was written years ago, and uses it to prove that the artist knew the Collector and therefore for old time's sake and in the spirit of friendship, the painting should be sold to him. (The Collector knows no shame.) He realizes the artist must think he is pathetic, but it works. The Collector still has the painting, one of three from *Black Mask.*

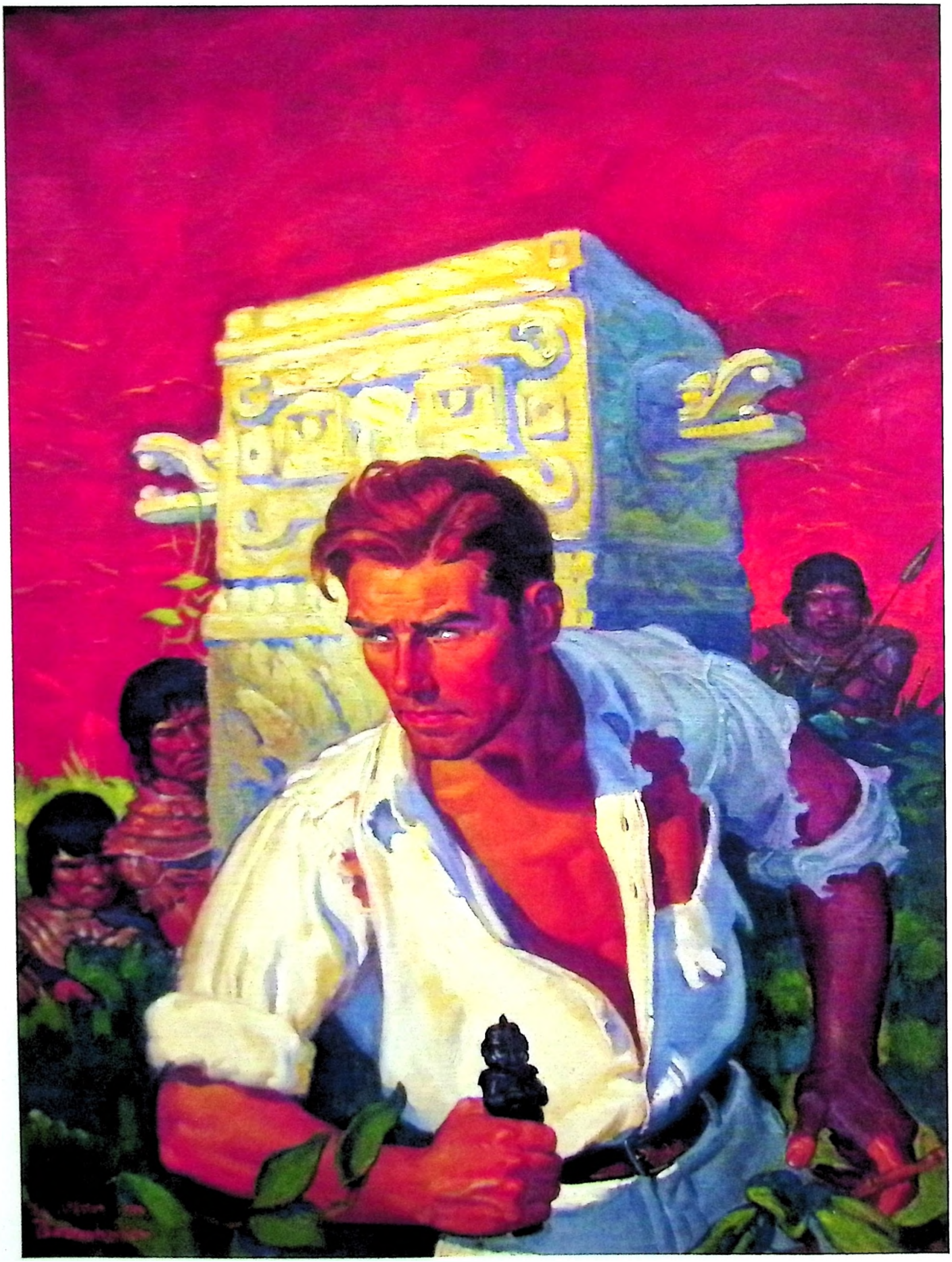
PULPCON 18—DAYTON, OH, 1989

It is four days before Pulpcon and the Collector has completely thrown his back out. Even the slightest move is painful and the muscle spasms are unbelievable. A doctor and a chiropractor both state the same prediction, that the Collector will not be driving 600 miles to Dayton, Ohio. However, since there might be a pulp painting at the convention, he stocks up on prescription pain killers, muscle relaxers and visits to the chiropractor. Moving in slow motion, with his back wrapped up like a mummy and doped to the gills, the drive takes sixteen hours instead of the usual ten. Halfway there he begins to realize that there is no way he can continue.

During the nearly 20 minute rest and stretch breaks, he tries to park the car near motels in case he has to give up and lie down for a week or so. Somehow the collecting urge and mania drives him on and he arrives in Dayton. During the next four days, except for meals and three hours of sleep each night, he remains standing because sitting is too painful.

After all this torture, not a single pulp painting surfaces during the entire convention.

Walker's children with *Adventure* pulp magazine and original cover painting



Original illustration for *Doc Savage* number one, March 1933. Oil on canvas, 36" x 30"

REAL ESTATE AGENT'S OFFICE, 1989

The Collection is literally pushing the Collector, the Wife and the children out into the street. There is not a foot of space for another book, magazine or painting. The house must be sold first and then they can buy a far bigger place. Real estate agents have been trying to sell the house for almost a year. Finally they call a conference and explain to the Collector that he must put the Collection into storage. It seems that the Collection is scaring away potential buyers... They object to the violent paintings and the thousands of books and magazines. The agents think the Collector is crazy (they call him "unique") but more important, he thinks they are crazier. He explains that putting his collection into storage would be like asking him to cut off his right hand. He goes on to say that the potential buyers are ignorant and have absolutely no idea what they have been privileged to view. But there is nothing to worry about because he has the perfect solution... He changes real estate agents.

OCTOBER 1989

The Collection moves into new quarters, a five bedroom barn of a house with the works: two car garage, family room, living room, dining room and full basement. In a feat worthy of the labors of Hercules, the Collector—despite severe back problems—personally packs and moves well over a thousand boxes of books and magazines. Somehow he manages to unpack and shelve this mass of reading material plus hang paintings throughout the house. Professional movers take care of a few hundred boxes that are too heavy, plus all the furniture and bookshelves. The neighbors watch in disbelief and astonishment as the Collector hires a building contractor to rip out the two car garage and turn it into a 20 x 22 foot library. The Collector explains to those who ask, "I didn't buy a new house to park our cars in it." Of course, no one understands what he is talking about.

1996

The Collector's daughter has just received her second tattoo. She now has a dragon on her ankle and a lizard on her shoulder. He is very disappointed. She knows he has been talking about his pulp painting tattoo ever since she was a little girl. Why didn't she get a *Black Mask* cover tattoo?

...LATER IN 1996

The Collector walks through the house in fear. The new library is full of books, pulps and paintings. The enormous basement is full, as are the living room, family room and bedrooms. He realizes there is no more space. Paintings and books are stacked on the floor, some spilling over in a chaotic mess. He realizes for the thousandth time that he is a very crazy person. No normal human addictions for him! Most people are addicted to drinking, shopping, drugs, gambling, sex, parties, work or watching TV. Even other collectors do not understand the Collector. He realizes with a shudder, once again, that it is time to move...

— © 2001 by Walker A. Martin

An original *Black Mask* pulp cover painting from Walker's collection

The first *Doc Savage* cover by Walter Baumhofer—high bid, $250! Pulpcon #2, 1972

Reminiscence BY REID STEWART AUSTIN

Alberto Vargas (1896-1983)
Watercolor on board, 1947
11.5" x 15.5"

When I was a wee lad, working as a messenger boy for Fawcett Publications in 1949—red windbreaker and all—I came up from the subway, exiting on west 49th or 50th Street. An amusement arcade fronted on Broadway and wrapped around down the side street to the subway exit. There was in the window facing the subway exit, a platform with wood panel backing about four feet high. This display case was empty except for four, possibly five (maybe six) original "Varga" paintings—all horizontal, as I recall. I'm sure I stood stunned for uncounted minutes, never having seen a Vargas original, much less unannounced, in a penny arcade window off Broadway. I know I circled and hovered like a bird of prey, consumed with equal parts of awe and a gnawing greed. Finally I went in and asked the only guy in attendance if he knew anything about the pictures in back. Naw, come back when the boss is here, was the bored reply. I paid the anonymous group of lovelies a number of repeat visits, but never connected with anyone who knew why or how they got there.

For days thereafter I knew no rest. I tossed and turned in fragmented sleep, increasingly consumed with one burning thought—how could I steal those unloved, orphaned paintings? At risk of seeming a rampant kleptomaniac, I would remind one and all that this is perfectly acceptable, if not downright normal, behavior for an eighteen-year-old Vargas fanatic. Needless to say, the lovely ladies soon disappeared from their dusty, minimum-security holding tank. Life goes on.

Remarkably (to say the least) in the early '60s when I was with *Playboy* and acting as Alberto Vargas' art director (would I kid you?) I happened to mention this to the artist and his lovely and protective wife, Anna Mae, whereupon she looked sharply at Alberto and said, "Harry. Harry Bloomfield."

It seems one Harry Bloomfield, a New York public relations man, had jumped into the resulting fray when, in 1946, Alberto Vargas revolted against his six-year bondage to *Esquire* and sued the magazine for assorted cruelties. Bloomfield became talent agent to Alberto's newly formed company Varga Enterprises. Among other things, he brought in a portrait of Paulette Goddard for Paramount Pictures, a series of movie star portraits for *Motion Picture* magazine and a multiple calendar deal. The 1948 "Varga" Enterprises calendar was on the newsstands and all twelve of the horizontals for the proposed '49 calendar were delivered to Bloomfield's hands when *Esquire* brought a thudding halt to everything, by a not-so-gentle reminder to all concerned, that "Varga" was a trademark created by and belonging solely to *Esquire*.

Reading between the lines, it became clear to me that with *Esquire's* fiat, Bloomfield, left with no product, left with nothing to sell as it were, left not so much holding the bag as holding twelve original paintings by a trademark called "Varga," considered his options. Thus the abandoned assembly in a penny arcade, off Broadway, in New York City, in 1950.

A final note: a few years back, Illustration House in New York auctioned a lovely "Varga" horizontal of a blonde in a yellow picture hat. When I saw it I felt an immediate jolt, that mysterious pang one experiences when unexpectedly faced with the deep, familiar past. I'm convinced this was one of the penny arcade girls from fifty years ago and I swear she was more beautiful than I remembered.

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Image above provided by The Illustration House, New York

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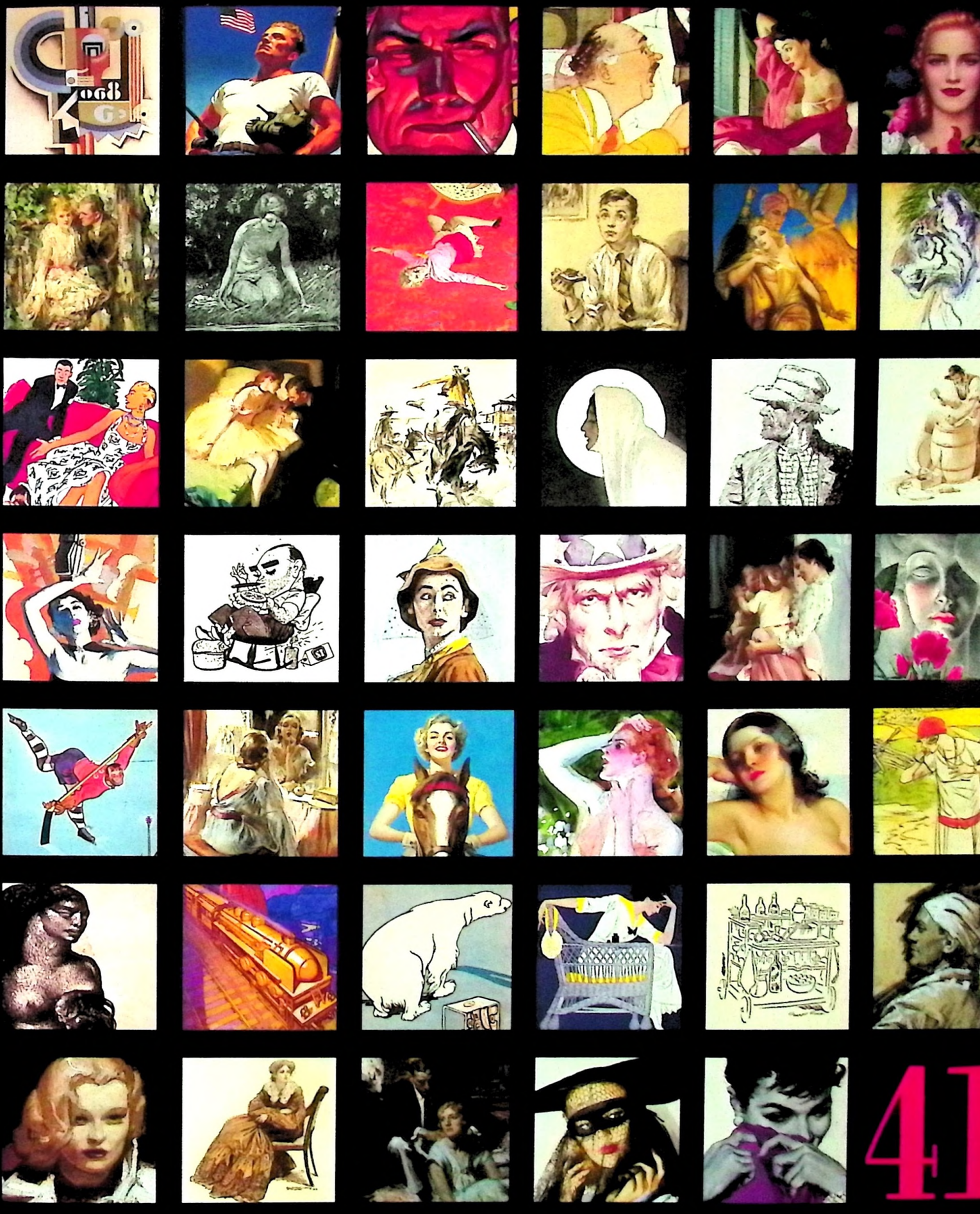

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LOST & FOUND

Norman Rockwell Paintings Recovered

Paintings stolen in 1978 are found in a Brazilian farmhouse

So Much Concern

A Hasty Retreat

The Spirit of 1976

BY MATT ZIMMER

On a cold February night in 1978, a group of unidentified thieves gained access to the now-closed Elayne Galleries in St. Louis Park, Minnesota; slipping past security guards with seven original Norman Rockwell paintings and launching a search that spanned three continents and over 23 years.

On December 12, 2001, authorities with the F.B.I.'s Art Theft Recovery Program announced that the last three missing paintings from the heist had, at long last, been found. *The Spirit of 1976*, *So Much Concern* and *A Hasty Retreat* were paintings owned by Brown & Bigelow Company, the calendar publisher located in Minneapolis/St. Paul. The paintings had been on loan to the Elayne Galleries at the time of their disappearance, and, according to authorities, will finally be returned to them. Between 1925 and 1976, Rockwell produced more than 100 illustrations for use in the company's annual Boy Scout Calendar.

Between 1978 and 1994, the whereabouts of the seven missing Rockwells had been a complete mystery — not to mention a source of continuous frustration for Bonnie Lindberg, the owner of the Elayne Galleries and art appraiser who never gave up on her quest to locate them. At the time of the paintings' disappearance, they were collectively presumed to be worth around $300,000; a sum that any one of the paintings individually would easily fetch at auction today.

Lindberg spent the years immediately following the theft trying to verify tips she had received, some more ludicrous than others (one caller told her to meet him in South Africa with $500,000 in cash). The F.B.I. also began conducting its own secret investigation.

But a break finally came in 1994 when a Brazilian gallery owner and art collector named Jose Maria Carneiro contacted the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He wanted to sell them two Norman Rockwell paintings that were in his possession: *The Spirit of 1976* and *So Much Concern*. The museum declined the offer, but promptly informed Lindberg of what had transpired. Five years later, Carneiro then contacted the Elayne Galleries about selling two other Rockwells: *Before the Date — Cowboy* and *Before the Date — Cowgirl*. Lindberg, this time, arranged to buy back the paintings.

A few months later, F.B.I. agents purchased two more paintings, *She's My Baby* and *Lickin' Good Bath*, from another Brazilian man who at first attempted to sell the paintings to a gallery in Philadelphia. They did not charge the man, however, and he claimed he was unaware that the Rockwells were stolen. At this point, four of the seven paintings had now been accounted for.

Carneiro's conspicuous solicitations, though, prompted U.S. officials to file a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) request with the government of Brazil in 1999. The country's bureaucracy kept the agreement from being ratified until February 2001. In September, Brazilian authorities executed a warrant on Carneiro's home and businesses in order to seize the three remaining paintings. Nothing was found. It wasn't until U.S. authorities traveled to Rio de Janeiro in December 2001 that Carneiro finally revealed that he had hidden the paintings at a farmhouse located in the countryside town of Teresopolis more than 60 miles away. Luckily for Carneiro, the Brazilian government does not extradite its citizens to the U.S. for non-drug related offenses and it is unlikely he will face any charges.

So Much Concern was done for the 1975 edition of the Boy Scout calendar depicting New Jersey scouts planting saplings. *The Spirit of 1976* was painted the following year in commemoration of the bicentennial with the New York city skyline visible in the background. *A Hasty Retreat* was used in the 1954 Brown & Bigelow seasonal calendar.

Images by Norman Rockwell © 2002, Brown & Bigelow, Inc., St. Paul, MN. USA.

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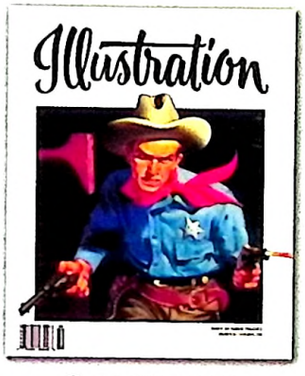

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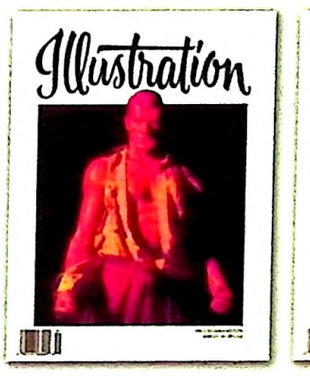

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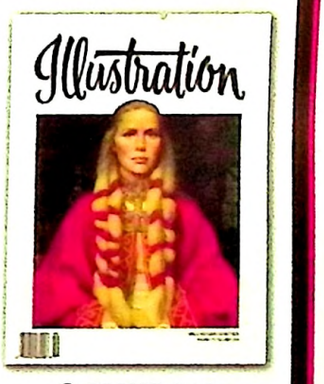

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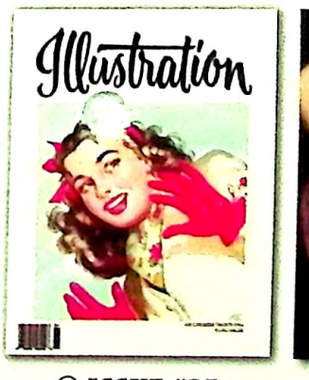

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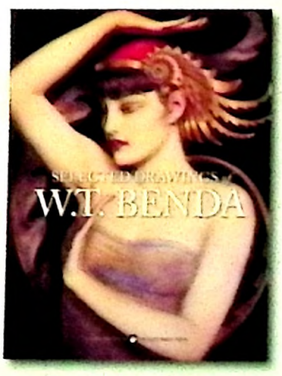

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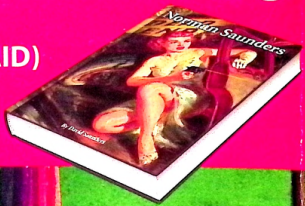

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